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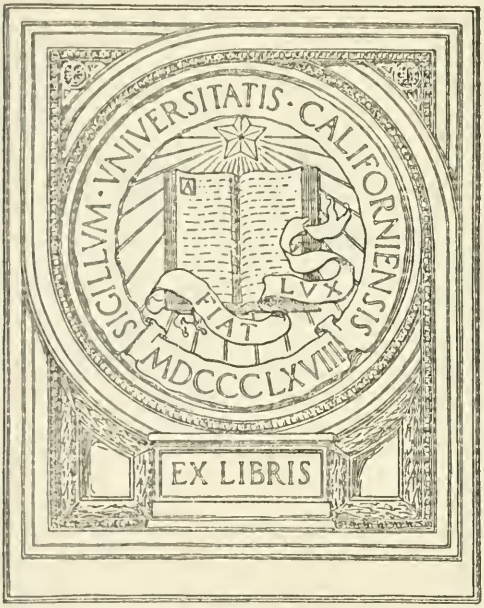

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THE

MASTER OF THE MINE

VOL. I.

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THE

MASTER OF THE MINE

BY

ROBERT BUCHANAN

AUTHOR OF 'GOD AND THE MAN' 'THE SHADOW OF THE SWORD' ETC.

'The visions of the earth were gone and fled—
He saw the giant Sea above his head'

KEATS' *Endymion*

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. I.

LONDON
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THE

MASTER OF THE MINE.

CHAPTER I.

A PROLOGUE, AND THE FIRST SCENE.

In a large wooden building, not far from the seashore, a building attached as schoolhouse to 'Munster's Boarding Academy for Young Gentlemen,' I, Hugh Trelawney, then scarcely ten years old, was moping alone. I had only arrived two days before from London, where I had parted from my father, a travelling lecturer in the cause of what was then known as the New Moral World. My mother had long been dead, and I had led a somewhat neglected life, sometimes accompanying my father on his

wanderings, more often being left to the care, or carelessness, of strangers. At last I had been sent to Southampton to complete a very perfunctory education.

It was afternoon, and a half-holiday; my new schoolfellows were playing close by. For myself, I was too used to loneliness to be very miserable. I merely felt an outcast for the time being, and took no interest whatever in my new associations.

As I sat thus, I must have fallen into a brown study, from which a slight sound startled me.

Looking up, I met the flash of two dark eyes which were intently regarding me.

'Are you the new boy?' said a clear voice.

I nodded, and stared at my interrogator, a girl of about my own age, whose black eyebrows were knitted in a way very curious in so young a child as she seemed.

Her arms and neck were bare, and she was fondling a kitten, whose bright eyes and lissom movements seemed to have something in common with her own beauty. I noticed, too, that she wore earrings, and that they were very bright and glistening.

'What is your name?' she continued, in the same clear questioning tone, altogether with the manner of a superior who was not to be trifled with.

'Hugh.'

'Hugh what?'

'Hugh Trelawney.'

felt somewhat overawed by the tone of the little lady, who, to my boyish eyes, seemed much more my senior than she was in reality.

She continued to regard me with the same keen scrutiny, and then said, looking at my attire:

'Who is *dead*?'

I still wore black for my mother, and, with a somewhat faltering voice, I told her so.

She did not seem surprised, and expressed no sympathy; but, walking to the schoolroom window, looked out, saying, 'Why don't you go out and play with the other boys?'

'I don't care about play. I am tired.'

'Tired with what?' she questioned quickly.

I made no reply, for I was not prepared for the question. I had meant to imply that I was low-spirited and dull, but had not cared to confess so much in so many words.

She understood me, however, and, although she seemed indifferent to my condition, troubled me with no more questions.

Glad to direct her attention from myself, for her bright eyes troubled me and made me feel ashamed, I stooped down and stroked the kitten, which she had placed upon the floor.

Even as I did so, I could feel her eyes still fixed upon me; but when I looked up again with an annoyed expression, she turned her eyes away, and laughed.

This emboldened me, and I began to question in my turn.

'Are you the schoolmaster's daughter?'

At this she laughed the more—so brightly and pleasantly, with such a good-humoured sympathy with my blunder, that my first impression of her began to improve, and I saw that, besides being a rather imperious, she was a very pretty young lady.

'Why do you laugh?' I remarked.

'At you,' she replied; 'because you take me for Mr. Munster's child. I am a stranger here, like yourself. My people live far away in South America, and are very rich. My mother is dead, and I don't remember her. My father has sent me here to be taught; but

I shall soon go back to him. Have *you* a father?' she added, quickly.

I nodded.

'Is he kind to you, and was it he that sent you to school?' she asked.

But without waiting for my reply to her questions, she continued: '*My* father cried when I left him, though he is a great man, and when he gave me these earrings, he told me my mother had worn them before me, and he kissed them. We live far away from here, in a brighter place. Don't you *hate* England?'

This was rather a startling query, but being in a state of mind bordering on disgust for life in general, I readily assented. Her eyes gleamed.

'It is a dreary place,' she cried—'dull and miserable, and it rains nearly every day. But it is different where I come from. It is always bright there, and there are flowers everywhere,

and the trees are full of fruit; and there are bright insects, and beautiful snakes without stings, that can be taught to twine round your neck, and feed out of your hand.'

As she spake thus, indeed, it seemed that I was transported to the land of which she spoke: her eyes were so sparkling, her face so bright and sunny, her form so foreign in its slender beauty,—and her earrings glistened, and her beautiful ivory teeth gleamed,—and I saw her walking in that land, a wonder among all wonders there, with fruits and flowers over her head, and brilliant insects floating round her, and luminous snakes gleaming harmless in her path, and dusky slaves waiting upon her and doing her courtesies. For it must be borne in mind that I had been a studious boy, fond of reading wild books of travel and adventure, and of picturing in my mind the wonders of foreign lands. Much that I had

fancied of dwellers in distant regions was realised in the face I now beheld for the first time.

At what age is a beautiful human creature —and more particularly one belonging to the gentler sex—insensible to admiration? I am certain that my new friend perceived mine, and that it did not displease her. It was, at any rate, genuine homage, quietly expressed, almost against my will, in the pleased yet timid glances of my eyes.

When she next spoke, her clear impetuous tone was greatly changed and softened, and a kinder light dwelt on her face.

'If you will come with me,' she said, 'I will show you the place. There is not much to see but the garden, and that I like well enough. Will you come?'

I rose awkwardly, as if at a word of command; and, taking my cap from the peg where

it hung, swung it in my hand as I followed her to the door.

Ashamed, yet pleased, to be chaperoned by a girl, I wondered what my schoolfellows would think of it.

Close to the schoolroom was the play-ground, or rather the capacious piece of lawn, dignified by that name.

My schoolfellows were playing cricket thereon. They paid no attention to me as I passed, but looked at my companion with a curious and not too friendly expression. She, for her part, passed along imperiously, without deigning to cast a single look in their direction; and I noticed that her look had changed again, and that her dark brows were knitted with the former unpleasant expression. She said nothing, however, for some minutes.

Our first visit was to the top of a high knoll behind the house, whence we could see the sur-

rounding country, and, some miles to the southward, the distant sea, with a white frost of billows on the edge of liver-coloured sands.

It was a quiet, sunless day; but far away there were gleams of watery light on the white sails of ships passing by under full canvas.

The girl looked seaward at the passing sails with much the same peculiar expression she had worn on our first encounter.

How could I fathom her thoughts? I guessed she was thinking of her home, but I was wrong.

'Are you *clever*?' she asked, suddenly.

This was a question which I, as a modest boy, felt totally unprepared to answer. I looked at the ground, peeped at her, and laughed. Her expression did not change.

'I mean, do you know much,' she continued, in explanation. 'Have you learnt much before?'

I explained to her, as well as possible, that my acquirements were very slender indeed, and merely consisted of the stray crumbs of knowledge which I had been enabled to pick up at day schools in the various towns where my father had resided during my childhood. In point of fact, I was a thoroughly uncultivated little boy, and had never been crammed with the solid pabulum so much in vogue at our public schools. I could read and write, of course, and knew arithmetic as far as the rule of three, and had got through the first four declensions in the Latin grammar; but all was a chaos, and I had no accomplishments.

I did not explain all this to my interrogator; for I was too proud.

'If you are not clever, and know so little,' observed the girl, thoughtfully, 'take care of the other boys. Why don't you make friends with them? Why do you like to sit alone, and

be sullen? If there were girls here, I should make friends, I know. But boys are different; they have cruel ways, and they hate each other.'

All this was said in a tone rather of reflection than of conversation; and she still kept her eyes on the distant ships, as if from some secret source far away the current of her thoughts was flowing.

'The boys hate *me*,' she pursued, 'because they think me proud. I am not proud, but I am quicker and cleverer than they are, and I come from a better place. I beat them in the class and at all things, except figures; and I have helped the biggest of them sometimes, when they were too stupid to understand.'

All this was a revelation to me. Until that moment I had never supposed that my companion's place was among the common scholars. During my first two days in school she had

been absent—a circumstance which she soon explained to me without any questioning.

'I have been away on a visit, and only returned this morning. I do not come to school every day, because I have headaches, and my father will only have me learn when I please. Now let us go down and look at the garden. There are fruit-bushes there, and some of the fruit is ripe.'

Still respectful and submissive, I followed, and we were soon wandering side by side in the quiet garden in the neighbourhood of the schoolhouse. Ever and anon, as we walked, I heard the shouts and cries of my playmates; but they were wafted to me as from some forsaken life.

A spell had been passed upon me, and I was in a dream. As I write, the dream surrounds me still. Years ebb backward, clouds part, the old horizons come nearer and nearer,

and I am again wandering in the quiet shade of trees with the shining young face at my side. I can no longer recall looks and words. All becomes a tremor. I see the one face only, but the voice becomes inarticulate.

What I remember last is a sudden sound dissolving a spell. A bell rung loudly from the house, and my companion uttered an exclamation—

'That is the bell for tea,' she exclaimed. 'You had better go.'

And she ran before me up the path. She was nearly out of sight among the garden bushes when, urged by curiosity, I took courage, and called after her.

'What is your name?' I cried.

She nodded back with a smile.

'Madeline,' she replied. 'Madeline Graham.' With that she was gone. For a moment I stood bewildered, and then, with quite a new light in

my eyes, I made the best of my way into the house, and joined the boys at the tea-table.

Although Mrs. Munster presided at the board, my new friend did not appear, and as I munched my bread-and-butter, I thought of her face with a kind of dreamy pleasure, delicious to recall even now.

CHAPTER II.

NEMESIS INTERVENES.

In my hasty sketch of school, I have made little or no mention of the schoolmaster and his wife. Indeed, so far as my present retrospection is concerned, they are nonentities; and they form part of my story only in so much as they affected my relations with the leading actress in the life drama to which these chapters are the prelude.

Munster was a feeble-looking but talented little man, with a very high forehead, which he was constantly mopping with cold water, to subdue inordinate headaches; and Mrs. Munster was a kind creature, with an enormous respect

for her lord, and quite a motherly interest in us boys, she having no children of her own.

The manner of these good people was kind towards all; but their treatment of Madeline Graham was blended with a sense of restraint almost bordering on fear. It was obvious that they had been instructed to treat her with more than ordinary solicitude, and it was equally obvious that they were liberally paid for so doing.

When she broke from all restraint, as was the case occasionally, their concern for her personal welfare was not unmixed with a fear lest open rupture might rob them of the instalments derived from their wealthiest pupil. Madeline, on her side, was perfectly conscious of this; but, in justice it must be said, that she seldom took undue advantage of her position.

The more I saw of Madeline Graham, the more I observed her manners and general

bearing, the more the thought of her possessed me, and blended with my quietest dreams.

After that first interview she held somewhat aloof for many days, but her eyes were constantly watching me in school and at meals, though without any approach to further familiarity. She seemed desirous of keeping me at a distance, for reasons which I could not possibly penetrate.

Gradually, however, we came together again.

Madeline had not exaggerated when she boasted of excelling the other scholars in brightness and intelligence. Her memory was extraordinary, and tasks which taxed all the energies of boyhood were easily mastered by her quick and restless brain.

She was taught with the rest of us in the open school, and was generally at the head of her class.

It so happened that I myself, although in many things dull and indifferent, was also gifted with a memory of uncommon tenacity. In all tasks which demanded the exercise of this function I took a foremost place. Madeline was my most formidable rival, and we began, quietly at first, but afterwards with energy, to fight for the mastery.

The competition, instead of severing, brought us closer to each other.

Madeline respected the spirit which sometimes subdued her, and I, for my part, loved her the better for the humanising touches of passion which my victory frequently awakened.

We had been friends six months, the quiet round of school life had become familiar and pleasant to me, when, one day, at breakfast, I noticed that Munster wore a very troubled expression, as he broke open the largest of a number of letters lying before him. The enve-

lope was of peculiar yellow paper, and the postmark looked foreign.

Madeline, who sat close by, turned white and eager, and her great eyes fixed themselves on the strange missive.

Within the letter to Munster, was a smaller one, which he handed to Madeline silently.

With impetuous eagerness, she opened and read it. It was very short. As she glanced over it, her bosom rose and fell, her eyes brightened and filled with tears.

To hide her trouble, she rose and left the room.

Meanwhile, Munster evinced similar surprise and consternation. He bit his lips as he read his letter, and passed his hand nervously through his hair. Then, with a significant look, he passed the letter to his wife, who, reading it, in her turn became similarly troubled.

As he passed the letter to her, something dropped rustling to the floor, and Munster, looking rather red, stooped and picked it up. It was a curiously printed paper, and looked like the note of some foreign bank.

Breakfast was finished—school began—but Madeline did not appear. Munster still looked fidgety and annoyed.

As for myself, I was torn by sensations to which my little heart had been hitherto a stranger. I felt on the brink of a precipice, down which all that I held dear was disappearing. I could not eat, I could not say my tasks, I could not think. What was going to happen? I asked myself wildly again and again.

At two o'clock, when we were summoned to dinner, no sight of Madeline. But by this time some hint of the truth was forcing itself upon me.

A whisper had passed round the school—'Madeline Graham is going away!'

Going away? Whither? To that far-distant, that mysterious land whence she had come, and whither I might never follow her? Going away for ever! Passing westward, and taking with her all that made my young life beautiful and happy. Could this be?

I shall never forget the agony of that day. I have had blows since, but none harder. I have felt desolation since, but none deeper.

After school, I hung round the house, haunted every spot where she might be expected to appear. I yearned to hear the truth from her own lips. I paced to and fro like a criminal awaiting his sentence. I could not bear the sight of the other boys, but kept to the secret places, moody and distracted.

Quite late in the evening, I wandered into the garden—a favourite resort of ours. The

sun had sunk, but his slowly fading light was still tinting the quiet place, and the shadows of trees and bushes were still distinct upon the ground.

I had not been here long when I heard the foot I knew, and, turning, I beheld my little friend hastening towards me.

She was pale, but otherwise composed, and said at once:

'Have you heard that I am going away?'

I stammered something, I know not what; it must have been inaudible. I had a sharp, choking sensation, and drooped my looks from hers.

'I have just got a letter from my father. I am to go back home immediately. See!'

So saying, she placed in my hand the small enclosure which she had received from Munster in the morning. Seeing my puzzled look, she exclaimed:

'You may read it.'

I did read it, in one quick, painful glance. I remember every word of it now. It was written in a large, bold hand, and ran as follows:—

'My own darling little Madeline,—You will hear from the good people with whom you are living that a great change has taken place, and that you must come home at once. Wish a kind good-bye to all your friends in England; perhaps you may never see them again. Come without delay to your loving father,

'Roderick Graham.'

Prepared as I had been for the blow, it did not fall so heavily as it might have done. I struggled with my feelings, and choked down a violent tendency to cry.

She perceived my consternation, and was herself moved. But there was a quick, strange

light in her eyes, as if she were contemplating something far away.

'I have prayed many a night that my father would send for me,' she said, thoughtfully; 'and now he has done so, I scarcely feel glad. I am afraid there is sonething wrong at home. Shall you be sorry, Hugh, when I go?'

At this open question I broke down utterly, and burst into a violent sob.

She put her hands in mine, and looked earnestly into my face.

'I thought you would be sorry. None of them will miss me so much as you. We have been great friends; I never thought I could be such friends with a boy. I shall tell my father of you, and he will like you, too. Will you kiss me, Hugh, and say good-bye?'

I could not answer for tears; but I put my arms round her neck, and I did kiss her—a

pure, true, loving boy's kiss, worth a million of the kisses men buy or steal in the broad world.

My tears moistened her cheek as I did so, but she did not cry herself.

She was altogether calm and superior, bowing down to my boyhood, compassionating and cherishing me; but in all possibility sharing little of my intense personal passion. She was nearer womanhood than I to manhood (girls always are more mature than boys); and she took my worship in gentle state. A queen, kissed by a loyal subject, could not offer her cheek more royally than little Madeline offered her cheek to me.

Yet her manner was full of strong affection, too. She would miss me, I felt sure.

In the midst of my agony, I found words to inquire how soon our dreaded parting was to take place. What was my astonishment to

hear that she was going to leave Munster's at once.

'There is a ship to sail in two days, and I must go away to Liverpool to-morrow, early in the morning. My poor father! There is something very wrong indeed, and it will be many a week before we meet, though the ship should sail ever so fast.'

As I write, recollection darkens, the sun sinks behind the little garden; the little shape fades away, and it is dark night. I seem to remember no more.

But what is this that gleams up before me?

It is the faint grey light of dawn. I have been in a very disturbed sleep, and am awakened by a harsh sound in the distance. It is the sound of carriage-wheels.

I start up; it is daylight.

I hear a hum of voices in the house below.

Without awakening any of my companions in the room, I creep to the window, and look out.

How chilly looks the cold damp world outside! How pitiless and cold lie the dews on the leaves all around! I shiver, and my heart aches.

A travelling-carriage stands at the door, and a sleepy-eyed coachman yawns on the box.

Hush! yonder from the house-porch comes Mrs. Munster, and by her side the little figure that I love.

The proud spirit is broken this morning, and the little eyes look soft and wet. Madeline clings to her protectress, and nods adieu to the servants, who flock around to bid her farewell.

She does not look this way. Does she think at all of the poor friendless boy whose heart she has filled with her beauty, and whose

eyes are watching her so wildly from the curtained bedroom window up above?

The coachman cracks his whip, the horses break into a trot, the little one leans out, and waves her handkerchief until the carriage rounds the corner, and is hid from view.

Madeline! Little Madeline!

I have fallen upon my knees by my bedside, and am passionately kissing the lock of hair I begged from her last night. My heart seems breaking. All the world has grown dark for me in a moment.

To what new trouble is this that I am about to waken, now that the one star of my life's dawn has faded away?

CHAPTER III.

AFTER TEN YEARS, I BEGIN LIFE IN EARNEST.

THE prologue over, the drama of my life begins. There is always a prologue of some sort, in which the keynote of life is generally struck for good or evil, pleasure or pain. Mine is the episode of Little Madeline. Much of the spirit of what has been told will survive in the events which I am now about to narrate.

Madeline Graham faded at once and for ever out of my boyish existence. I neither saw nor heard from her directly; but some months after her arrival in her distant home,

there arrived a wonderful parcel, full of dried fruits, nuts, and other foreign edibles, addressed, in the hand I knew, to 'Master Hugh Trelawney,' at Munster's. My schoolmates laughed wildly on its arrival. I tore it open, expecting to find some message in writing, showing me that I was not forgotten. There was not a line. With a somewhat heavy heart, I distributed the more perishable fruits among my schoolmates, reserving a very little for myself—for I had no heart to eat. I stored up many of the nuts in my trunk, till they were quite mouldy and rotten. When I was obliged to throw them away, I seemed to cast away at the same moment all my hope of seeing my dear little love again.

No other message—no other gift—ever came; though I wrote, in my round, boyish hand, a little letter of thanks and kind wishes. All grew silent. Little Madeline might be

lying in her grave, far over the lonely waters, for aught I knew to the contrary.

I remained at Munster's until I was fourteen. In all these years I never forgot Madeline, never ceased to mention her name every night when I prayed by my bedside, never relinquished the thought of some day sailing across the ocean, and looking on the dear bright face again.

This intense and solitary passion became, if I may so express it, the secret strength of my life. It brightened the coarse and indigent experience of school-life, filled it with tender and mysterious meanings and associations; it made me inquiring and tender, instead of hard and mean; it determined my tastes in favour of beauty, and made me reverence true womanhood wherever I saw it. In a word, it gave my too commonplace experience just the colouring of romance it needed, and made the dry

reality of life blossom with simple poetry, in a dim religious light from far away.

What wonder, then, if, at fourteen, I found myself reading imaginative books and writing verses—of which early compositions, be certain, Madeline was the chief and never-wearying theme.

I had taken tolerable advantage of Munster's tuition, and was sufficiently well grounded in the details of an ordinary English education. I had, moreover, a smattering of Latin, which, in my after struggle for subsistence, turned out very useful. I should have progressed still further under the care of my schoolmaster, but at this period my father died, and I found myself cast upon the world.

It is not my purpose—it is unnecessary—to enlarge on my own private history, and I shall touch upon it merely in so far as it affects the strange incidents in which I afterwards became

an actor. Things were at this point when I one morning received the startling intelligence that my father was dead, and that I was left alone in all the world. The first feeling which the news produced in me was one of very confused and dubious sorrow. Of late years I had seen very little of my father. Since I had come to Munster's I had been left there, never even going home for my holidays as other boys did. Munster's was my home, and to all intents and purposes Mr. and Mrs. Munster were a father and mother to me. Still, for all that, the knowledge that I had a father in some remote quarter of the globe, who paid for my maintenance, and came to Munster's about once in six or eight months to spend an hour with me, had been a source of some satisfaction, and caused me now, for a short time at least, to deplore his loss.

Then came other and more complicated

thoughts. If I had no longer a father to pay for my maintenance, what was to become of me; for, as far as I knew, I had no other relation in the world? Puzzled by these thoughts, and seeing no solution to them, I could do nothing but wait in eagerness and dread for what was to follow.

The next morning, when I was dressing, Mrs. Munster came into my bedroom and handed me a jacket with a crape band on the left arm; she also pointed to a cap which she had brought in with her, and said,

'You must wear this one now, Hugh.'

Then she turned, bent her kindly eyes upon me, and kissed my forehead and murmured, 'My poor boy!'

I ventured to inquire whether I was to see my poor father in his coffin or to follow him to the grave. The tears came into the woman's eyes, and she took my hand.

'You will never see him again,' she said; 'never. He died in America, and was buried before we received the news. But you are a brave boy,' she added, 'and must not grieve. It is sad for you, my dear; but trouble is sure to come sooner or later. If it comes when one is young, so much the better, for one is better able to bear it.'

'Mrs. Munster,' I said piteously, 'what is to become of me?'

The good lady shook her head.

'I don't know, my dear,' she replied; 'your poor father has not left you a sixpence . . . . Hugh,' she added, suddenly, 'have you any relations?'

'No,' I replied, 'not one.'

'Are you sure?' she continued. 'Think, my dear.'

I did think, but it was of no use. My brain

would not conjure up one being to whom I could possibly lay any claim.

'No uncles, or aunts, or cousins?' persisted Mrs. Munster; when suddenly I exclaimed—

'Yes, Mrs. Munster; now I remember, I've got an aunt. At least, I *had* an aunt; but she may be dead, like father.'

'Let us hope not,' said Mrs. Munster. 'Well, my dear, tell me what she is like, and where she is to be found.'

'I don't know what she is like,' I replied. 'I never saw her.'

'Never saw her?'

'No; she never came near us: but I've heard father speak about her. She was my mother's sister, and her name is Martha Pendragon, and she lives at Cornwall.'

'Martha Pendragon,' repeated Mrs. Munster. 'Is she married?'

I reflected for a moment, then I remem-

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bered having seen letters addressed to 'Mrs. Pendragon,' and I said as much.

'And where does she live?'

'St. Gurlott's, Cornwall.'

Mrs. Munster wrote it down.

'"Mrs. Martha Pendragon, St. Gurlott's, Cornwall." It looks promising, as I dare say St. Gurlott's is a very small place. Make yourself as contented as you can for a few days, my dear. I will write to the lady and ask her what she means to do.'

I could do nothing else but wait, and I accordingly did so; though I found it utterly impossible to take Mrs. Munster's advice, and preserve a contented frame of mind.

My exceedingly hazy recollections of my aunt's communications were by no means such as to inspire confidence. I began to ask myself, for the first time, why it was she had never been permitted to visit my mother in her home;

why my mother, who was evidently fond of her sister, had never made a journey into Cornwall to see her; and, above all, why my aunt had never come to visit my own mother when she was dying? Thus I speculated for four days, at the end of that time I saw Mrs. Munster receive a letter, open it, read it, and glance strangely at me.

'It is from your aunt, my dear,' she said; then, looking at the letter again, she added: 'She *is* your aunt, I suppose?'

'From Mrs. Pendragon?' I asked.

'Yes,' she replied, with a strange smile. 'From your Aunt Martha.'

I wanted to hear more, but no more came. Mrs. Munster again turned her attention to the letter, and began studying it as intently as if she were carefully working out some abstruse mathematical problem. Presently, her husband came into the room, and she handed him the

letter. My curiosity received a fresh stimulus when I saw him start at sight of it, read it twice, and then glance, as I thought, half pityingly at me.

'I suppose it's all right,' he said, turning to his wife; 'the boy must go.'

She nodded her head thoughtfully.

'It seems a pity, doesn't it, after the education he has had?' she said to her husband; then turning to me, she added, 'Let me see, Hugh, how old are you now?'

I replied that I was fourteen.

'And are you sure you have no *other* relations except this—this Aunt Martha as she calls herself?'

I replied that during the last few days I had been racking my brain incessantly on that subject, but without avail.

'Well,' she said, 'I suppose your Aunt Martha is better than nobody, my dear—she

seems a good-natured sort of person, and is quite willing to give you a home; but it seems a pity to take you from school before your education is complete, and if we could find another relation who would let you stay here it would be so much better for you. I will write again to your aunt, she may know of someone though you do not—your father's relations for instance; but if she does not—why, the only thing you can do is to go to Cornwall.'

I accordingly had to wait a few more days, at the end of which time another letter was received from my mysterious relative. This time it failed to bring with it disgust or amazement, and conveyed only disappointment.

'Your aunt tells me she is your only relative on your mother's side,' said Mrs. Munster, 'and your father's family she knows nothing about. She has fixed Thursday as the day

on which you are to go to her; therefore, my dear child, I see no help for it: you must leave us!'

Thus it was settled. On the Thursday morning I, accompanied by my small stock of luggage, started on my travels, and saw the last of Munster's.

CHAPTER IV.

JOHN RUDD, POET AND CARRIER.

Munster's was situated in the suburbs of Southampton. It was arranged, therefore, that I should journey by a small steamer as far as Falmouth, and thence by road to St. Gurlott's-on-Sea. I was conducted to the boat by Mr. Munster. On arriving at Falmouth, after an uneventful passage, I was met on board by a rough-looking person, who informed me that he had been deputed by 'Missus Pendragon' to convey me and my belongings to St. Gurlott's.

What manner of man he was I could scarcely tell, beyond realising the fact that he

was of tremendous height, that he wore a white beaver hat, and that his figure was wrapped in an enormous frieze coat which reached to his ankles. He gave a glance at me, and then said in a peculiar pipy voice—

'Come, lad, gie's the tip about your boxes, and we'll move on: the mare's got a journey afore 'un, and we'm best nawt be late!'

I moved aft, and pointed out to him my little trunk. He looked at it in much the same way as a giant might look at a pebble, put it quietly under his arm, and moved off again, inviting me to follow. We crossed the gangway, and came on to the quay. Here we found a large van, and a fat sleepy-looking roan horse. The waggon was roofed with black tarpaulin, and on the side was painted, in large white letters,

'JOHN RUDD, CARRIER, ST. GURLOTT'S.'

On coming up to the vehicle, my conductor paused and disposed of my trunk, then, turning to me with a 'Come, young master, jump in,' he gave me a lift which summarily placed me inside and on the top of my box; then, before I had time to recover myself, I felt that the waggon was jolting along.

What the day was like, and what sort of a prospect we were passing through, I had not the remotest idea; the tarpaulin and the enormous figure of the driver completely shutting me in from the world. I waited for a while, thinking, perhaps, my companion might turn communicative and make some suggestion as to my better disposal; but none came. He sat like a log, and, beyond a few disjointed exclamations to the horse, uttered not a sound.

As he evidently had no intention whatever of taking the slightest further notice of me, I

thought it best to approach him. I accordingly shouted 'Hi!' several times and gave him a few vigorous pokes in the back; but neither of these attempts producing the slightest effect, I concluded he must be asleep. I accordingly swung off the van behind, and, running beside the horse, hullo'd to him from the road.

This trick told better. Mr. Rudd, who seemed, indeed, to have become oblivious of the world, gradually turned his face towards me and gazed at me for a time with a vacuous stare. Then he pulled up the horse with a jerk.

'The Lord preserve 'ee!' he said, 'what's the lad doin' thar?'

I explained that I had swung out of the waggon, because it was not pleasant inside, and added:

'Have you got room up there for two, Mr. Rudd?'

Instead of replying to my question, he gave a chuckle, and said :

'You'm a smart 'un : Mr. Rudd, eh? Now, haw did you come to knaw that thar', young master, eh?'

I explained that I had concluded from his appearance that he must be the master of the van, upon which 'John Rudd' was painted; but he only chuckled again and piped :

'You'm a little 'un to be such a scholard!'

As I saw he was about to become fossilised again, I hastened to repeat my former question. Mr. Rudd gazed abstractedly at the seat and then at me.

'Mayn't I come up,' I said, 'it's so close inside the van, and I would rather ride beside you, Mr. Rudd?' Then, without giving him time for a refusal, I leapt up and nestled beside him.

Mr. Rudd made no protest—he simply said,

'Move on, mare,' and the mare moved on forthwith.

We had left Falmouth behind us, and were moving cumbrously along the high road. Looking to the right and to the left I could see nothing but undulating sweeps of land, bleak and barren, with the stony highway stretching before us, and winding about, serpent fashion, until it was lost to view. We were travelling westward, evidently, and, as far as prospect went, we might be going forward into the Desert. There was not a cart or horse or human being to be seen anywhere; and the only sound was the rattle of the waggon, as it passed along over the rough road.

It was past mid-day, and the sun was as hot as it had been any day that summer. As I felt it scorching my face and head, I looked at my companion, and marvelled again. His huge ulster-coat was buttoned up to his chin,

and his great round face was shaded by his broad felt hat. He was by no means a bad-looking man, and he was still young—only five-and-thirty, or thereabouts. His skin was tanned and weather-beaten, and his eyes were fixed upon the mare with his habitual dreamy stare.

Finding it was useless to expect him to talk, I sat for a time quietly by his side, watching, with some amount of interest, the rough and stony track we were following; then, when we had covered a mile or so, the mare went along at a walk, and I leapt lightly into the road and kept pace beside her.

My change of position once more aroused my companion from his trance; he turned his eye slowly upon me, and said:

'I reckon you knaw a deal?'

I replied, modestly, that I knew a thing or two.

'I wonder naw,' he said, 'whether you can *write*?'

I answered with some decision that I certainly could, at which I thought his face fell.

'Poetry, naw?' he inquired. 'Warses like?'

I replied that though I was able to write a capital hand, I had only once or twice aspired to original composition; at which he chuckled delightedly, then, fixing his eyes with a fascinated glare upon my face, he repeated in a high shrill voice the following lines:—

> To Missus Pendragon, who's always so pleasant,
> John Rudd, of St. Gurlott's, brings this little present.
> May her life be as sweet as best sugar can be,
> And the only hot water be mixed wi' her tea!

'What do you think o' that?' he asked anxiously.

'Very good,' I replied. 'Where did you read it? In a book?'

'I didn't read 'un, master, I *wrote* 'un," he replied. 'Leastways, I should ha' wrote 'un if I *could* write. Naw, you'm a smart chap, pr'aps you could take them lines dawn?'

'Of course I could,' I replied. Whereupon I produced a pencil from my waistcoat pocket, and, asking Mr. Rudd to repeat the verse again, I transcribed it on the back of an old letter.

When I handed up the paper to Mr. Rudd, his face became positively gleeful.

'You're a smart chap,' he repeated, 'nawt much doubt o' that.'

'Do you make *much* poetry?' I asked.

He nodded his head slowly.

'A goodish bit,' he replied: 'leastways, I should if I'd allus a smart 'un like you at hand to take 'un down. But I'm naw hand at setting dawn at it, and it dawn't allus keep in my head. 'Tis a gift,' he continued. 'It all began

when I were a lad, a-driving up and dawn Falmouth way wi' father. Then I used to hear the old waggon go "tum to tum" alawng the road, and the warses they came and kept time. Lord! to think o' the thousands of bootiful pomes I ha' made: they'd make a wallum; and I've got 'em all here in my head, thick as bees in a beehive, all a-buzzing together, one atop a' t'other.'

'Do you live at St. Gurlott's, Mr. Rudd?'

'Iss, young master; I drives this here van three times a week to Falmouth and back.'

'Then perhaps I'll be able to take down some of your poems for you. I am going to live there, too, you know!'

This idea pleased the drowsy giant immensely. He was about to expatiate upon it, when a heavy rain-drop falling on his hand brought him back from the clouds.

'Lawd love the lad!' he exclaimed, 'how we be a-loitering. Here, jump up, young master, we'm got a good twelve miles afore us yet, and a black night prawmising to come.'

I took the hand which he extended to me, and which looked like a giant's paw, and sprang up to my seat beside him.

'Hurry up, Martha,' he said, 'get on, old garl,' and the mare's slow walk broke into a trot, which caused the waggon to rattle and shake, and my teeth to clatter in my head.

The prospect still continued bleak, but it was now not quite so desolate. To the right and left of us still stretched the bleak moorland, but now it was broken up by green hillocks and belts of woodland. Here and there on the meadows were cattle grazing, while at intervals were white-washed cottages with little gardens running down to the roadside. From time to time we rounded some quiet bay, and caught a

glimpse of the sea. Presently, far ahead of us, I saw clustering houses, from the midst of which arose a church spire.

'What is that?' I asked.

He seemed to know by instinct what I meant, for he replied without taking his eyes off the horse.

'That, young master, be Craigruddock. We'll stawp there for a bit of summat to eat and drink, and to gie the mare a rest.'

When we entered the village of Craigruddock our appearance caused no little stir. John Rudd was evidently well known—for as the lumbering waggon went rattling down the little street, shock-headed children came peeping out of the doorways, and here and there a peasant woman made her appearance, and nodded cheerfully to us as we went by. For each and all John Rudd had a good-humoured grin, which I thought broadened a little as the

waggon was pulled up with a jerk before the door of the inn. Here, after some little trouble, we got something to eat, a few boiled eggs, and some home-baked bread. When the horse had been rested, we started again on our journey.

The warm day was succeeded by a cold evening, and with the darkness had come rain. I was glad to follow John Rudd's example, to wrap myself well up in my overcoat, before I again took my seat behind the mare. We jolted on again, covering what seemed to me an interminable space. The darkness rapidly increased, the rain continued to fall, and, worn out with fatigue, I fell into a fitful doze.

I was dimly conscious of the waggon rolling on, of John Rudd making occasional disjointed remarks, rhythmical in character, to which he evidently expected no reply, and of certain stoppages, when John mysteriously

disappeared, and returned refreshed and strengthened for his work.

At length, however, John Rudd's voice aroused me indeed.

'Wawk up, young master,' said he; 'we'm gettin' pratty nigh your place.'

I roused myself and looked about me, but there was nothing to be seen. Darkness encompassed us on every hand; the wind was sighing softly, making a sound like the distant murmur of the sea. Presently the waggon stopped. The carrier jumped down, and waited for me to do the same; then he gave a peculiar whistle as he went round to the back of the waggon to haul out my trunk.

The whistle had its effect. The darkness was suddenly penetrated by a light, which seemed quite close to us, and a man's voice called out in a broad country dialect:

'Be that *you*, John Rudd?'

'Iss, mate,' returned Rudd. 'You katch hold o' the young gentleman. I ha' gawt the bawx.'

'Be this the lad?' asked the voice, as I felt a heavy hand laid upon my shoulder.

'Iss.'

'Waal, my lad, you be welcome to St. Gurlott's!'

The hand kept hold of my shoulder and led me along. The next thing I became conscious of was standing upon the threshold of an open door, and of the voice of my guide saying, heartily:

'Yar he be, Martha!'

Then another voice, that of a woman, answered:

'Lawd love the lad; let's look at 'un!' and then there was silence.

I found myself standing in the middle of a quaint Cornish kitchen, gazing upon my newly

found friends. The individual who had led me into the kitchen, and who turned out to be my uncle, was a tall broadly built man, dressed in a red-stained suit of coarse flannel, said suit consisting merely of a shirt and a pair of trousers. His hands were big and broad and very red, his head was thickly covered with coarse black hair, and he spoke the broadest of Cornish dialect in a voice of thunder. Having finished my inspection of number one, I glanced at number two—namely, my aunt. She was a comely-looking woman of forty, very stout and motherly in appearance. She wore a cotton dress, a large coarse apron, and a curious cap, not unlike the *coifs* so popular in Brittany.

My amazement at the sight of these two individuals was so strong that I could scarcely force my lips to utter a word: but if my surprise was great, theirs seemed greater. After the first glance at me, they looked uneasily at

one another, the genial smiles faded from their faces, and the words of welcome died upon their lips.

A pleasant interruption to all this was John Rudd, who at this moment came in with my trunk upon his shoulder and placed it down on the kitchen floor, then wiped his brow and opened his overcoat.

'It's martal bad weather you'm brought alang wi' ye, Mr. Rudd,' said my aunt; 'yar, ha' summat to keep off the rain.'

She handed him a glass of ale, which he drank.

'Thank ye, missus,' said he, drawing the back of his hand across his mouth. Then he made a dive into the voluminous folds of his coat and produced a packet.

'That be for you, missus,' said he; 'a little present, wi' John Rudd's respects; tea

and sugar, wi' a suitable inscription o' my awn making.'

'Thank you, Mr. Rudd,' returned my aunt, taking the packet. 'You'm vary kind.'

'Read the warses, missus; read the warses!' said Mr. Rudd, whereupon she proceeded to do so.

It was a proud moment for John Rudd; he seemed to expand with pleasure. And though to all intents and purposes he was gazing upon Mrs. Pendragon, he rolled one eye round my way, as if to watch the effect upon me. When the reading was done he smiled affably, while my uncle brought down his open hand heavily upon his knee.

'Waal done, John, waal done!' cried my uncle, heartily; while another voice, one which I then heard for the first time, said:

'Oh, Mr. Rudd, what beautiful poetry you do write!'

At the sound of the voice all eyes, mine amongst the rest, were turned upon the speaker, whom I discovered to be a little girl somewhat about my own age, or perhaps a trifle younger, so pretty, and so quaintly dressed, she looked like a little Dresden china shepherdess.

'Wha, Annie!' said my aunt.

'I declare I'd forgot all about 'ee!' my uncle added. 'Come yar, my lass, and say how do ye do to yer cousin!'

At this, the little girl came forward, and, gazing earnestly at me, timidly offered me her hand.

Suddenly, John Rudd, who had been fumbling about his coat again, produced another packet, which he this time handed to my cousin. She opened it, and found it contained a brightly coloured shawl and a sheet of foolscap, on which some lines were

penned. Knowing Mr. Rudd's weakness, Annie proceeded to read the lines:

> To Annie Pendragon, who charms all beholders,
> John Rudd, of St. Gurlott's, sends this for her shoulders;
> That she'll always be happy, in sunshine and in flood,
> 'Tis the wish of her friend and admirer, J. Rudd.

Having read the verses, Annie fell to volubly admiring them and the shawl; but Mr. Rudd, feeling the praise too much for him, gleefully took his departure. He paused at the door, however, to give me a last look, and to express a wish that we should become better acquainted.

The moment he was gone, attention was again concentrated upon me. My aunt took a good look at me, trying to find traces of my mother and father in my face. My uncle discovered I was both wet and cold; while Annie said:

'Why don't you give him his supper,

mother; I'm sure he must be hungry after that long ride wi' Mr. Rudd.'

Annie's suggestion was adopted, and we all sat down to supper. While I ate, I had leisure to look about me. The kitchen was large and homely in the extreme, with a clean stone-paved floor beneath and great black rafters above, from which hung flitches of bacon, bundles of tallow candles, and divers articles of attire. The ingle was great and broad, with seats within it, formed of polished black oak, and the fire burned on the open hearth. In one corner was a recess, with curtains, containing a bed, which I afterwards discovered was to be mine for the night.

Very little was said or done that evening. If I was astonished at the sight of my relatives, they were equally so at the sight of me. A sort of constraint came upon us all. I was not sorry to find that they were very early people,

and that at ten o'clock they retired, and left me to make myself as comfortable as I could in the press bed in the kitchen. My head was aching, partly from fatigue and partly from excitement, and no sooner did I lay it upon the pillow than I fell into a sound sleep.

CHAPTER V.

ANNIE.

I was awakened next morning by the sound of voices in the chamber, and, looking forth from my sleeping-place, I saw my uncle, seated in his stained flannel clothes, devouring a substantial breakfast of tea and home-baked cakes of my aunt's making, waited on by little Annie, who, seen in the bright morning light, looked even cleaner and neater than she had looked the night before.

'Lawd love 'ee, little woman,' my uncle was saying, 'who put that sart o' nawnsense into your head! I warrant Tawm Penruddock, or some other gomeril, ha' been up here clack-

ing to mother. Dawn't go dawn the mine naw more? Why, the mine's bread and butter, vittles and drink, to you and me!'

'Tom Penruddock says 'taint safe, father,' returned Annie; 'and Tom ought to know, for he's worked there ever since he was born.'

'He knaws no more than this chunk o' bread, little woman. He's the idlest chap o' the gang, Tawm is. There, dawn't you worrit. The Lawd's under the earth as well as above it, and 'll take care of father, never fear!'

Unseen in my corner, I slipt on my clothes; but, by the time I had done so, my uncle had left the cottage. Annie was still there, and she took me to a little bedroom upstairs where I washed, and brushed my hair. Descending again to the quaint old kitchen, I found my aunt, just come in from feeding the poultry. She gave me a kindly nod; then sitting down at the table, drew me gently to her, and push-

ing the hair off my forehead, looked thoughtfully into my face.

'Let me look at 'ee by daylight, lad! Ay, I was right—you be as like your poor father as one pea is like another. Lawd forbid you should e'er be half as clever!'

'Why not, mother?' asked Annie, who was looking on with a smile.

'Because he were too clever to sattle down. He rambled up and dawn like a moor pony, till the Lawd took 'un, and ne'er made himself a home; and when he died there was none of his kith and kin near him to close his eyes. Thar, lad, sit dawn and take your brakfast. We'll try to mak a man of 'ee, for my poor sister's sake.'

This sudden allusion to my dead parents, coupled with the strangeness of my surroundings, brought before me more forcibly than ever the utter forlornness of my position; and sent the

tears starting to my eyes. I fancy Annie noticed this, for she quickly changed the subject, asked her mother for some more hot scones, and put a chair for me at the table.

This diversion gave me ample time to recover myself. Feeling heartily ashamed of my exhibition of weakness, I swallowed the lump in my throat, dashed the back of my hand across my eyes, and determined from that hour forth to remember that tears did not become 'a man.'

The breakfast was appetising—perhaps from the very strangeness of it. Never before in my life had I had placed before me, at eight o'clock in the morning, a meal of hot scones, boiled potatoes, and milk; yet I mightily pleased my aunt by disposing of enough to keep me going for the rest of the day.

'Ah! lad,' she exclaimed, as her bright eye kindled with pleasure, 'you's gawt some

Cornish blood in 'ee after all, and can eat your vittles with a relish. You'm got no proud stomach, my lad, and will be a man like your uncle before lawng.'

The breakfast being over, my aunt and Annie busied themselves with 'setting things to rights'; and, feeling somewhat in the way, I took my cap and strolled out, to find out if I could what sort of a country I had been landed in.

The kitchen door opened directly into the 'back-yard,' as they called it, and here I found the poultry leisurely picking up the grain which my aunt had given them before breakfast. Here I found, too, a mongrel puppy, a sort of cross between a collie and a greyhound, it seemed to me, which, the moment I made my appearance, came wriggling, serpent fashion, about my feet.

I passed through the yard, round to the

front of the house, the puppy following close at my heels. The front of the cottage was very trim and neat; and there was a very small garden, here, which was tolerably well cultivated: I afterwards learned it belonged to Annie, and owed its pretty appearance entirely to her hands. It was a curious illustration of the mingling in her of the useful and ornamental. She was passionately fond of flowers, and two-thirds of her little garden was devoted to them, while in the other third were beds of mustard and cress, radishes, and celery, with which she regularly supplied 'relishes' for the table.

Having made a rapid survey of the little garden, I turned my eyes on the prospect before and beside me. The cottage, which stood alone on a slight eminence, was faced immediately by the high road which swept past and curved on to the village, which lay some quarter of a mile

to the left. Immediately before me was what seemed to me a dark expanse of morass, bleak and barren enough, and dotted here and there with clumps of stunted trees. Beyond was the sea—calm, cold, and glimmering like steel.

I strolled carelessly along the road, amusing myself from time to time by throwing a stick and trying to teach the puppy to retrieve. A couple of hundred yards from the cottage, I came to an iron gate, surrounded by a plantation of fir-trees, and with a long avenue leading I knew not whither. Here I paused, and, without thinking, threw the stick as far as I could up the avenue. But the puppy crouched at my feet, and declined to stir. So I opened the gate and went in.

I had not gone many yards when a sharp voice arrested me.

'Here, I say, *you*!' it cried. 'What are you doing here?'

I looked up, and saw a boy of about my own age, dressed like a young gentleman. He had black hair, black eyebrows, that came close together, and a hanging lip. I saw at once, by his dress and manner, that he was no miner's son.

'Look here, you're trespassing, you know,' he continued; then suddenly, 'Why, you don't belong to St. Gurlott's. What's your name?'

I told my name, and added that I was a stranger, having come to the village only last night to live with my Uncle and Aunt Pendragon. In a moment his face changed; a contemptuous sneer curled his lip as he said:

'Old Pendragon's boy, eh?' then. 'What do you mean by wearing those clothes? I thought you were a gentleman!'

His tone, more than his words, roused all the latent pride of my nature. Flushing to the temples, I turned on him.

'I am as much a gentleman as you,' I said.

'What?'

'Oh, I'm not afraid of you! Do you know what they'd do with you where I come from? They'd thrash you, and send you to bed, to learn better manners.'

He clenched his fist, and advanced threateningly towards me. Then, looking at me from head to foot, and finding that at all events I was his superior in point of physical strength, he changed his mind. I whistled up the puppy, and walked away.

When I reached the cottage again, I came face to face with Annie.

'Where have you been?' she asked.

I told her I had been rambling idly about. She nodded brightly.

'I've got no work to do to-day,' she said; 'leastways not much. If you like, I'll ask mother to let me come out and go for a walk.'

'Do,' I said; and off she flew.

She was a long time gone—so long that I began to fear the permission had been denied. She came at length, however, when I saw the cause of her delay. Her print frock had been exchanged for a stout gown. She wore a pair of silk gloves, and a hat which was evidently intended for Sundays only. As my eye wandered over these things, she blushed and tried to appear unconscious.

'Which way shall we go?' she said.

I was so perfectly unacquainted with the district that the question seemed to me absurd. I left the choice to her.

'Which way do you like best?' I said.

She pointed with her hand.

'I like to go *there*,' she said, 'to walk on the shore.'

'On the shore?'

'Yes; don't you see that glittering over

there? That's the sea, though it looks like a bit of the common, now it's so still. I like to go there and walk on the shore, and see the ships pass along, and listen to the washing of the waves on the stones.'

We accordingly started off across the moorland towards the sea, and after a mile's walk reached the cliffs.

Wild and desolate, they overhung the ocean, which was at high tide. A narrow path through the rocks led down to the water's edge. Descending it, with the sea-gulls hovering over us, we reached the shore, and found there a sandy creek, and a solitary wooden house. We looked up: the crags rose above our heads right up into the blue heaven. Then we turned our faces towards the sea.

'It isn't like the sea, is it?' I asked, as we stood side by side; 'it looks like a big broad river.

'*Now*' she assented: 'but it isn't always like this. The waves are sometimes as high as houses, and they roar like wild beasts. Then there's been ships, big ships that go to India, broken up here on the rocks, and drowned men and women have been cast ashore.'

'Have you *seen* them?'

'No; I've only heard tell of them. When the winds are blowing like that, and the wrecks come, mother and me stop in the house to pray for father!'

'My uncle? Why, he's a miner.'

'Yes; but he's one o' the life-boat men, too, 'cause he's so strong. Look at that wooden house; that's where they keep the life-boat.'

In following the direction indicated by her pointing finger, my eye fell upon something else besides the house which contained the life-boat; a rude coble lay floating in the water a few yards from where we stood. It was

attached to an iron ring driven into the rocks.

'Whose boat is that?' I asked.

'Oh, that belongs to John Rudd, the carrier; him that brought you to our house.'

'Why, what does he do with a boat?'

'Nothing; only he found it drifting in from the sea. Then the master took it away from him, saying it was his, and offered it for sale; as nobody wanted it, he got it back again by paying a little to the master.'

'And what does he do with it now?'

'He goes out fishing sometimes, when he's got the time. Sometimes he gives us a treat. He took me out in it once.'

'Did you like it?'

'Oh, yes!'

'Would you like to go again?'

'What—now?'

'Yes, now. Suppose we take the boat and

pull out for a bit; it would be good fun—better than staying here.'

She hesitated. There was evidently such a difference in the size of John Rudd and me.

'Do come,' I urged; 'the oars are here ready, and I can pull as well as John Rudd.'

Still she hesitated, but yielded finally. We pushed out the boat together, and I pulled away out on to the dead calm sea. How pleasant it was there, with the sun pouring its golden beams upon us, and the water smiling around and gently lapping the boat's side! Annie took off her gloves, and trailed her fingers in the water; then she leaned over and looked down into the emerald depths below, while my eyes again swept the prospect inland.

Everything was distinguishable from the sea, the low-lying flats stretching black and desolate beneath the warm summer sky—the village, which, from my present point of vantage,

seemed but a handful of houses thrown in a hollow, just beyond the cottage where destiny had placed me. I also perceived now that there were numerous other cottages scattered about the morass, and finally, that there was one large turreted mansion rising up from a belt of greenwood.

'What house is that?' I asked.

'That? Oh, that is the master's house.'

'The master?'

'Yes; Mr. Redruth, the master of the mine. Besides that,' she added, 'he's the master o' the whole place.'

'Does he live there?'

'Yes; a good part of the year.'

'Anybody else?'

'The mistress.'

'That's all?'

'Yes; except at holiday times, when the

young master comes home from school. He's home *now*.'

Having a suspicion in my mind, I asked her what the young master was like, and she gave me an accurate description of the boy I had encountered a few hours before. I said nothing just then of my adventure; and, after this, we fell to dreaming again. Annie looked down into the sea, while I watched the shore, past which we were lazily drifting. Suddenly my eye was attracted to a huge black mass, which rose like an ominous shadow between me and the horizon. I asked Annie what it was; and she replied:

'The mine!'

To her the word had a world of meaning; to me it had none. It simply awakened in me a keen desire for knowledge, which I immediately wanted to gratify.

'The mine!' I said. 'I never thought

about the mine before, or we might have gone to see it. We'll pull in and go now; shall we?'

To my amazement, she half rose from her seat, and put out her hands, as if to stop me.

'No, no!' she cried, 'we won't go there—not to the mine!'

Her face was white, and she was trembling, though she was wrapt in the sun's rays as in a warm mantle of gold.

'What's the matter, Annie?' I asked. 'Are you afraid?'

'Yes,' she said, 'I am afraid of it, because I know it is cruel. It is like a great black mouth; it seems to ask you to come down, and then it crushes you and you die. I have seen strong men like my father go down into it happy and laughing, and then afterwards I have seen them brought up dead, all so black

and changed and dreadful. Oh, don't talk about it; I can't bear it!'

She shivered again, and covered her eyes with her trembling hand, as if to shut out the sight.

During this conversation, I had been pulling steadily onward, so that the boat was now opposite the cliff surmounted by the mine. I turned the boat's bow shoreward; then, after a stroke or two, I rested on my oars and looked up.

We were now right below the cliff, and the view from our point of vantage was strange indeed.

On the very summit of the crags I saw the mining apparatus overhanging the sea. First, a chimney, smoking loftily at the top; then another, smoking less loftily half-way down; then, lower down, almost close to the sea in

fact, a third smoking chimney, connected with what appeared to me to be a small mining office. On one side of the cliff, tall ladders were placed, to enable the miners to ascend from, and to descend to, the shore; and he must have a sure foot and a strong head who could comfortably tread those ladders, round by round, the sea roaring under him and almost flinging its spray after him as he went higher and higher. Taking in the whole external apparatus in one view, chains and pulleys, chimneys and cottages, posts and winding machines, seemed to be scattered over the whole face of the cliff, like the spreading lines of an immense spider's web, while in some parts mules and their riders were trotting up and down a rocky track where the pedestrian visitor would scarcely have dared to tread.

I turned giddy, even at the sight of it. I rubbed my eyes and looked again at my cousin.

Her trembling agitation had passed off, and she was looking at me.

'It was silly of me to talk like that,' she said; 'but I can't help it. Sometimes, when I think o' them poor men that have been brought up, and remember that father is there, it a'most makes me scream!'

'But there's no danger,' I said, '*now*!'

'There's always danger!' she returned. 'Tom Penruddock said so, and I told father, but he only laughed. Ah, but I've seen others laugh too—them as is lying now in the churchyard!'

This conversation, sad as it was, had its fascination for me. It made me want to know more about the mystery of the mine. What I saw, indeed, was not the mine itself, but only

its outer machinery. The main shaft, Annie told me, opened down into the solid earth, from the body of the cliff, and was covered by a trap-door, from which dizzy ladders led down into the subterranean darkness.

CHAPTER VI.

FIRST GLIMPSE OF THE MINE.—UNDER THE SEA.

It must not be supposed that my uncle and aunt, although they had adopted me, could afford to allow me to eat for very long the bread of idleness. Had it been necessary, they would willingly have shared with me their slender means; but it was not necessary. I was fourteen years of age, I had received a good education, and I was in every way fitted to earn my bread. But what could I do? My inclination was for the sea. I longed to become a sailor; not because I had any particular love of ships, but because I had some wild idea that it might

ultimately be the means of bringing me to Madeline. Besides, I must own that I was not exactly proud of my newly-found relations and a home which was so different to Munster's. Sometimes at night, when I sat furtively watching my uncle smoking his pipe in the ingle, and my aunt darning the stockings, I fell to wondering what the boys would say if they saw them, and my cheeks burned with shame. It was on one of these evenings that I ventured to express my wish to go to sea. My aunt threw up her hands in horror.

'Lawd love the lad!' she cried; 'if he be'ant like his father a'ready! You'd like to gaw to say, would ye? to wander over the face of the earth and die, like your father did, without a roof to cawver your head? A sailor! Lawd love 'ee, and why would you be a sailor?'

I stammered something about wishing to

work for my living, when my uncle cut my explanation short by patting me on the head and saying:

'You'm a good lad, I'm glad to hear 'ee talk saw; but there's no cause for 'ee to gaw to say. You'm a comin' to wark wi' me, Hugh!'

'In the mine!' I exclaimed in delight, for my strong desire to go down the shaft was growing; but my uncle shook his head.

'Naw, naw, lad; the mine be only for big coarse men like me; a slip of a lad like you will be better whar you'm gawing—inta the awfice.'

'The office!' I repeated, my ardour being considerably damped.

'Have 'ee fixed it all, Tawm?' asked my aunt.

'Iss, mother, I fixed it wi' the master this fawrenoon. Hugh can gaw on Monday and begin.'

Thus it will be seen that my destiny was mapped out for me. On the Monday I began my duties as under-clerk, with but little satisfaction to myself beyond the fact that I contributed six shillings a week towards the household expenditure. Thus my new life began, a life which promised to be uneventful enough. At first I chafed somewhat; but Time, that healer of all things, brought solace to me. As months rolled on, the memory of Munster's began to grow dim; and when I thought of Madeline it was of some lovely vision seen in a dream.

Monotonous as my days promised to be, I soon managed to infuse a little pleasure into them, principally with the aid of my friend and ally, honest John Rudd; for we soon became close chums. He conceived a great respect for me, partly on account of my superior education, and partly because I rendered him such

valuable assistance in the transcription of his poems. He placed his boat entirely at my disposal, also lent me his gun, a rusty old Joe Manton, which I kept in secret, and with which I used to amuse myself in the evenings when my work was done.

But the one great fascination for me was the mine. It was becoming a sort of 'Frankenstein,' haunting me by night and by day; I saw it before me as I sat writing in the office, and when I was asleep at night I saw it in my dreams, opening its huge black jaws and preparing to crush away some hapless life. The more I heard of it, the stronger grew my wish to explore for myself those dark bowels of the earth.

Again and again I had begged my uncle to take me down, but he refused. At last, however, one Sunday morning, he came to me and to my intense delight said:

'You can gaw dawn the mine t-day, Hugh. I be gawn' dawn. I'll tak' 'ee wi' me.'

Excitement is welcome to all boys, and it was especially welcome to me; but there was one cloud on my sunshine, when I looked up and saw that my cousin Annie was as white as a sheet and trembling violently.

'Don't father, don't!' she said, piteously.

My uncle laughed.

'Lor a mussey, Annie, what a frawhtened little woman you'm gettin'!' he said. 'Wha, you arn't like a miner's lass, Annie. We must mak' the lad a man, nawt a milksop. Naw then Hugh, hurry up and get ready, we'm nawt got much time to lose!'

The first thing to be done was to attire myself in one of my uncle's mining suits of flannel, and possess myself of one of his broad felt hats. This was soon done. I was now a man in all but years, and I managed to cut a

tolerable figure in my uncle's clothes: indeed, when I made my reappearance in the kitchen, he declared, with a nod of approval, that I looked every inch a miner. It was a proud moment for me: now, for the first time, I felt my manhood upon me, and I laughed with my uncle at Annie's pale cheeks and my aunt's sad eyes.

My uncle handed me half a dozen candles, which he told me to put into my pocket; then, with a merry nod to the women-folk, we started.

It was no easy matter to get to the entrance of the mine, not being able to go straight to the shafts as in the case of mines on level ground. First of all we had to make our way to the counting-house, in which I sat at my daily toil. The way was long and difficult to travel, on account of the accumulation of mining gear we had to pass; long chains stretched out over

bell cranks, wooden platforms looking like battered remnants of wrecks, yet supporting large beams of timber and heavy coils of rope. Here there was a little creaking shed, there a broken-down post or two, and there again we had to wind round by the rocky path amidst chains and cables and ascending loads.

I, having to travel this road every day of my life, was well accustomed to it, and I accordingly followed on my uncle's footsteps without much feeling of curiosity or joy; but when we had passed the counting-house, ascended the cliff, and gained the trap-door entrance to the mine, my heart began to beat with anticipation.

Here we both paused.

'You'll keep a strawng head,' said my uncle, looking at me. 'Twill be a bad business if you begin to tramble like our Annie. Are you sure you arn't afraid, lad?'

'Not a bit,' I returned; then, looking at the ladder which was set at the entrance of the mine, I asked, 'Shall I go first?'

'Bide a bit, bide a bit, lad!' he returned. 'Gi 's one o' tham candles.'

I did so, whereupon he lit it and stuck it into my hat, then he lit another for himself; after this he began to descend the first ladder, and I followed him.

The first object I was conscious of was the huge beam of a steam-engine, which worked on my right, alternately bowing and rising, and heavily straining at the deluge of water which it lifted. On the other side, through boards the chinks of which admitted just light enough at the foot of one of the ladders to show the passage, I saw the loaded tubble, or bucket, rushing past its descending companion.

We were now between two shafts, descending from stage to stage; the daylight was com-

pletely gone, and we depended solely on our candles, which threw but a faint light into the gloomy abyss below.

After descending two or three ladders, which were almost perpendicular, we came to a platform, and made a halt.

"Waal, lad?' said my uncle, holding his flickering candle above his head, and looking into my face.

I laughed, and hastened to assure him it was all right, though, in reality, I began to feel some of my cousin's misgiving. We rested a second or two, the halt indeed being made more for me than for my guide; then my uncle took another lighted candle, and stuck it into my hat.

'Naw, lad,' said he, 'come on wi' a will; lay howld o' the sides o' the ladder, and ha' a care.

I promised to obey him, and we recommenced

our descent, he going first and I following. We went down first one ladder and then another, till again we came to a platform and rested.

'What's below?' I asked of my uncle, who was again regarding me curiously, trying to detect if possible any sign of fear or shrinking in my face.

'What's belaw, lad?' he said. 'Wha, the water drained from all the mine, the pumps at wark pumping it awt, and p'raps a cartload o' ratting human bawns.'

We descended a couple more ladders and landed again, this time to traverse one of those side galleries in which the pit abounded. It was about seven feet high, but so narrow that two persons, if thin, could just squeeze past one another. The only light now was that afforded by our candles, which flickered in the hot, sickly, damp vapour which floated about us.

The fetid air of the place was beginning to

tell upon me, my breath became laboured, the perspiration streamed down my face, while mud and tallow and iron drippings were visible on my clothes. My uncle, who was similarly bespattered to myself, but who was breathing more freely, recommended a rest. I sat down on the floor while he set himself to replenish the candles, which had nearly flickered out.

Sitting thus in the stillness, I became conscious of a strange moaning and soughing sound. After listening intently, I asked my uncle what it was.

'It's the sae,' he returned; 'it be rolling up thar above our heads.'

CHAPTER VII.

A VISIT OF INSPECTION.

Thus began my knowledge of the mine; from that day forth my interest in it deepened, and it haunted me like a passion. Its darkness and perils had a fascination for me, and I was not content till I had explored every cranny and familiarised myself with the mining art or science. Eager for information, I read every book on the subject that I could buy or borrow, and in a short time I could have passed a pretty stiff examination as an engineer.

I must now pass over, at one swift bound,

a lapse of eight years. During that time, I had exchanged the duties of clerk for that of assistant overseer, and then, on the death of Mr. Redruth, for those of overseer-in-chief.

Behold me, then, at twenty-two years of age, the mainstay of the Pendragon household; changed somewhat, for—

> Nature doth subdue itself
> To what it works on, like the dyer's hand;

rough, robust, full of strength, and its rude pride. In my twenty-second year occurred an event which was destined to exercise no little influence over my whole future life. As I approach the chronicling of this event, my heart beats and my hand trembles, and the fitful passion of those far-off days awakens troublously again.

I was standing one day on the cliffs, close to the mouth of the mine, when I saw two figures coming from the direction of the village.

One was my cousin Annie, now a comely young woman; the other was young George Redruth, whom I had scarcely set eyes upon since the time of his father's death.

They were talking earnestly, and did not seem at first to notice me; but presently I saw Annie give a startled look in my direction, and afterwards they approached together. Now, I don't know how it happened—it was instinct, I suppose, or something of that sort—but never, from the moment of our first meeting as boys, had I been able to regard George Redruth with any feeling but one of excessive irritation and dislike. His flippant, patronising manner had something to do with it; so, perhaps, had his good looks, for his worst enemy could not have denied that he was superbly handsome. As I glanced at his pale, beautifully formed face, at his slight graceful figure, at his elegant dress, I was painfully conscious of my own

physical inferiority. Though I was strongly built and not ill-favoured, wind and weather had worked their will on me, and I was rough, I knew, as my daily occupation.

He strolled up carelessly, swinging his cane, and smoking a cigar.

'Ah, Trelawney,' he said, with a nod, 'your cousin Annie has been telling me that there are complaints, again, about the outlying shafts of the mine. So I'm going down to have a look round.'

'Very well, sir,' I replied, wondering in my mind why Annie had chosen to make herself the mouthpiece of the men.

'I suppose it's safe enough?' he said, after a moment. 'You know, though I am a mine-owner, I don't know much about the business; I used to leave all that to the governor.'

'It is only right,' was my reply, 'that you

should judge its safety for yourself. If anything happened, you would be responsible.'

'I don't know about that,' he said sharply: 'I pay you for superintending the work, and if there's danger '——

'There *is*!' I interposed.

'Well, then, I pay *you* for facing it and reporting upon it. One can't be both employer and servant too!'

I was about to retort somewhat angrily, for the manner of his speech was even more insufferable than its matter, when I met Annie's entreating eyes, and refrained.

'Mr. George,' she said quickly, 'is anxious that nothing should go wrong.'

'Of course I am,' cried the young man, with a curious laugh. 'I know what flooding the mine means—any amount of expense, perhaps ruin; for if the sea once got fairly in —whew! it would be a bad job for me.'

'And for the men,' I said, frowning.

'And for the men, of course; but it's their living, and no doubt they know how to look after themselves. Be good enough to make all ready, Trelawney, for I'm going down at once. I suppose there is a dress handy?'

I answered in the affirmative, and walked off towards the office. Looking back over my shoulder, I saw him glance after me, and then, with a contemptuous laugh, say something to Annie. My blood boiled angrily, and my cheeks 'grew crimson. I could have turned back and struck him in the face.

Close to the office, I found my uncle, who had just come up from underground, and who was covered with the rust of the copperas earth. I told him the young master was going down, and he was delighted.

'He's a brave lad, Master Jarge,' he cried, 'a fine brave lad! I'll gaw wi' 'un,

and shaw 'un where the wall be breaking down.'

Presently, Redruth came along, and followed me into the office, where several woollen costumes were hanging. He laughed gaily, as he transformed himself into a miner. When the transformation was complete, he still looked the gentleman; and, in spite of myself, I felt the irritating sense of my own inferiority.

My uncle led the way down the trap, showing infinite care and tenderness for the young master, who followed him, while I came last. The earth soon swallowed us, and the only light we had was the light of the candles stuck upon our persons and in our hats.

From ladder to ladder we went, till we reached the central platform, where we paused to take breath. Then down we crept again, till we reached the lowest galleries, and became conscious of the gnome-like

figures at work in the submarine darkness. My uncle still led the way, stopping from time to time to pilot Redruth over awkward stones and dangerous trap-holes. Our progress was now very slow. Walking, stooping, crawling, climbing, descending, we proceeded; now crossing black abysses, thinly covered with quaking planks; past wild figures kneeling or lying, and labouring with short pickaxes at the ore; and as we went, the roar which had been in our ears from the beginning deepened, while the solid rocks above us seemed quaking in the act to fall.

At last my uncle paused and wiped his brow. We were all three now completely disfigured,—with earth, mud, tallow, rust, and iron drippings.

'Where the deuce are we now?' asked the young master.

'Whar, Master Jarge?' repeated my uncle,

with a friendly grin. 'Right dawn under the sae.'

Redruth glanced at me.

'How far down, Trelawney?'

'Twenty fathoms under the sea level, sir, and three hundred feet, or more, out beyond low-water mark.'

'Well, where's the damage? It all seems snug enough.'

He was certainly very cool, though he had not been underground more than once or twice in his life; and I wondered to myself whether his *insouciance* came from bravado or sheer stupidity.

'Come this way, Master Jarge,' said my uncle, crawling forward, until we reached a narrow space with just room for two of us to stand abreast. Suddenly, we found ourselves ankle deep in water, and at the same time thick

drops like heavy rain fell from the rocks above us.

My uncle reached up with his hands, and touched the roof, which was partially fortified with wood and cement.

'I plugg'd this yar last night, Master Jarge,' he explained: 'the salt water were streaming in like a fall.'

As he spoke, the roar deepened to a crash, and we could distinctly hear the sea grinding on the pebbles, right above our heads. It seemed momently as if the whole fabric of the rock would break in, under the flux and reflux of the rolling waves.

I saw Redruth start back, and glance towards the gallery down which we had come. But he recovered his *sang-froid* in a moment.

'The deuce!' he muttered. 'How thick is the ceiling here, Trelawney?'

'Six feet at the thickest, sir; at the thinnest,

where you see the wooden plug, not more than three.'

Young Redruth looked up again, and taking a candle from his person, examined the rock. It was actually percolated with sea-water oozing through the solid granitic mass, and covered with green and glistening ooze; but through all the dampness and sliminess the stripes of pure copper ran in rich bars, forming part of the finest and most precious lode in the whole mine.

'Why, it's almost solid ore,' he said.

'Iss, Master Jarge,' returned my uncle, 'but us can't go no further thisways without flooding the shaft. It would be warth thousands o' pounds to gaw on, and 'twill cost a heap to keep tight and safe as it be.'

'Is that so, Trelawney?'

'Yes, sir. We must build up this part of the gallery and have it closed. I can't keep

the men from using their picks where the ore runs thickest, even when every inch of stuff they loosen is bringing them nearer to their death.'

The young master made no further remark just then, but continued his examination of the other parts of the mine. In several other places the roof was dangerous. My uncle pointed out the various unsafe portions, and led the way from gallery to gallery, until the tour of inspection was complete.

At last we re-ascended to the sunshine. How bright and dazzling all seemed after that subaqueous darkness! Redruth seemed in a brown study. Not until he had washed himself and reassumed his ordinary attire, did he find his tongue. By this time, my uncle had returned to his labours down below, and we two were left alone.

'Is there anything else you wish to report?'

asked Redruth, sharply, as we stood together at the office door.

'Nothing more than I have already reported in writing.'

'Well, what was that?'

'The whole mine wants repair. Putting aside the outlying galleries, where the sea may enter at any minute, the engines and machinery need replacing, the ladders are rotten; in fact, everything is in the last stage of decay; and no wonder, seeing that scarcely a penny has been spent on it within my memory.'

He frowned, and bit his lips; then he looked me contemptuously from head to foot.

'You are a pretty fellow, a very pretty fellow. You want to ruin me, eh?'

'No, sir; but I want to ensure the safety of the men.'

'Pshaw! You are a croaker, and know

little or nothing of the matter,' he said, turning on his heel.

'At any rate, sir,' I returned, following him, 'you will have the outer galleries filled up, at once? If you don't, I'll not answer for the consequences.'

'Who the devil asked you?' he cried. 'Your place is to report, not to advise. As to ceasing to work the outer galleries, I suppose you know that the richest lode of ore runs there, and that the inner portion of the mine is almost barren?'

'I know that; but——'

'But you prefer mutiny and disaffection to study of your employer's interests? I tell you flatly, I don't intend to listen to such nonsense. Thanks to you, the mine at present yields little or no profit, and I am in a fair way to become a beggar.'

He saw me smile incredulously, as I cried: 'Then you will do nothing?'

'I will do nothing under your advice, for I don't trust you. A gentleman in whom I have the utmost confidence will be here to-morrow morning. You will accompany him down the mine, and you will show him what you have shown me. I shall then be guided by his advice, not by yours.'

With these words he walked away.

Soon after sunrise the next morning, as I sat in the office at the mine-head, I was visited by the person to whom young Redruth had alluded. He was a thin, spare, sandy-haired young man of about thirty, with a mean type of countenance, and an accent which was a curious compound of Cockneyisms and Americanisms. He had, indeed, been born within the sound of Bow Bells; but having spent a portion of his manhood in the United States,

he affected the free and easy manners of a Yankee citizen.

He gave me his card, on which was printed the words—

EPHRAIM S. JOHNSON,
Civil Engineer,
Bethesda,
State of New York.

I glanced at the name, and then took a good look at the owner. He wore a showy tweed suit, a glaring red necktie with a horse-shoe pin, and a light billycock hat. Altogether, his appearance was not prepossessing.

He informed me, in a high shrill voice, that he had been instructed by Mr. George Redruth to go down the mine, and report on its prospects and condition.

'You'll find its condition bad enough,' I said quickly.

'Maybe I shall, and maybe I shan't,' he

answered. 'I don't want you to prejudice my mind, young man; not that you could do it if you tried. Guess I haven't been three years on the Shoshone territory for nothing.'

He pronounced it 'nothink,' but that is neither here nor there. I saw at once from his manner that he had come with a preconceived opinion, and that nothing he might see would be likely to make him side with the men against their master. However, I treated him as civilly as possible, and, when he had assumed the necessary dress, we made the tour of inspection together. When we came to the outlying gallery, above which the sea was thundering, he trembled a good deal and gave other signs of agitation, and he did not recover himself until he had regained the open air, which he did after a very perfunctory visit indeed. Once or twice on the way, as we ascended the ladders communicating with the abyss, he grew giddy,

and I had to watch him carefully, fearing he might fall. All this, it may be guessed, did not increase my respect for Mr. Ephraim S. Johnson.

He did not altogether recover his equanimity until he had sloughed his miner's dress and put on his own radiant apparel. Then, curious to know what he would say to his employer, I questioned him:

'Well, Mr. Johnson? Did I exaggerate when I said that the mine was unsafe?'

He answered me sharply and impudently, but averting his small keen eyes from mine:

'Excuse me, young man, I shall report my opinion to Mr. George Redruth, not to *you*. I don't mind saying, however, that I guess you *did* exaggerate, on the whole.'

Angry at his manner, I could not forbear retorting:

'You didn't seem to express that opinion when you were down below!'

'What do you mean?' he cried, turning crimson.

'I mean that you seemed rather in a hurry to get back to the *terra firma*, up here!'

He did not reply, but gave me a look full of malignity and dislike. Then he walked out of the office, but the next minute he put his head in again in the door.

'You think yourself smart,' he said; 'but you'll have to get up early before you're as smart as *me*. I mean to do my duty, young man, and so you'll find afore very long.'

He left me with this curious valediction. I saw neither Redruth nor Johnson for some days. Then I heard casually that the latter had gone back to London. About a week after his departure, I saw it publicly announced that arrangements had been made with George

Redruth, Esq., the proprietor, to turn the St. Gurlott's copper-mine into a joint-stock company, the said George Redruth, Esq., receiving half the purchase-money and retaining the other half in fully paid-up shares. Nothing was said about the precise amount of commission money which went into the pocket of Mr. E. S. Johnson, but the name of that worthy was down on the prospectus as surveyor and inspecting engineer, and I had no doubt whatever in my own mind that he had made a very excellent bargain.

CHAPTER VIII.

I PLAY THE SPY.

A LITTLE after the establishment of the London company, Johnson came down to St. Gurlott's and took lodgings in a farmhouse in the neighbourhood. After what had occurred, I expected to receive my *congé* at once, but although the stranger was formally installed as resident inspector and supervisor, no attempt was made as yet to remove me from my former position. The fact was, I believe, that Johnson had too little confidence in his own practical knowledge, to say nothing of his own courage, to undertake willingly the perilous duties of overseer.

So greatly did I resent his presence, however, that I at first resolved to resign; but yielding to the entreaties of my uncle and the prayers of Annie, I remained. I soon saw that Johnson was completely in young Redruth's confidence—was, in fact, his servant, spy, and general familiar. Under his advice, nothing whatever was done to amend the condition of affairs in the mine, the fittings and machinery of which remained as dilapidated as ever. On my own responsibility, however, I closed up the dangerous outer galleries, and forbade the men, on pain of dismissal, from working the ore in that direction. Although Johnson heard of this, and doubtless reported it to his superior, neither of them made any communication to me on the subject—just then.

I must now turn from the affairs of the mine to my own quiet life at home in my

uncle's house—which will lead me, rapidly enough, back to young George Redruth.

I had noticed for several weeks that some important secret communion was going on between my uncle and aunt. What it was all about I couldn't guess, but it was evidently connected in some way with myself. I often caught them looking at me, and, when detected, exchanging glances of infinite meaning. I was beginning to think of asking for an explanation, when accident made me acquainted with the whole mystery.

I had returned home one evening too late for the ordinary tea, and was sitting taking mine alone, waited on by Annie, as I had to return to the office again that night, and might probably have to go down the mine. I still wore my miner's dress, but my uncle had changed his, and was sitting contentedly smoking on one side of the fire, while just

opposite to him was my aunt, busily darning stockings.

The meal over, I got up, lit my pipe, and wished them all good night.

'Don't sit up for me!' I said, 'I shall be late to-night.'

'Where are you going to, Hugh?' asked Annie, carelessly.

'Back to the office. I've got to go down the mine again, too.'

'Shall you go to the office first?' she asked, 'or down the mine?'

I laughed at what I then thought her unmeaning curiosity.

'Which do you think I ought to do first, Miss Curiosity?' I said.

'Go down the mine,' she answered, promptly; 'then you could change those things, and do your accounts comfortable-like.'

'Upon my word, Annie,' I said, 'there's a world of wisdom in that pretty little head of yours.'

I put my arm round her shoulders—gave her a kiss—at which my aunt and uncle laughed delightedly.

'Good night all!' I said again. 'Annie, I shall take your advice, and go straight down the mine!' And I was off.

I had gone only a little way, when I suddenly remembered that certain account-books which I should need that night were in my room at the cottage. I hesitated a moment—then I turned back to get them. It was growing rather dark; but that was of little consequence to me, since I could have walked every step of the way blindfolded, and for the descent into the mine, daylight was of little use.

So I strolled slowly back, enjoying my pipe and the freshness of the evening air, and

when I reached the cottage it was quite dark. I paused before the kitchen window, which was open, for the night was sultry, and looked in.

My aunt and uncle still sat in much the same position they had occupied when I left them, but Annie was gone. I was about to put my head in at the window, and acquaint them with my return, when I heard the mention of my own name.

'Yes,' said my aunt, nodding her head, 'I ha' watched 'em, and I know Annie favours Hugh, if ever any lass favoured a lad.'

'Well, I do hope you'm right, Martha, old gal,' my uncle returned. 'He be a good lad, and I shall be glad to call him my son.'

I heard no more—I felt like a man who had received a knock-down blow, and I staggered under it a bit. Annie love me?—the old people planning our marriage? It was all

so new it took me a time to recover. But was it true? Were they right? Did my cousin really care for me? I glanced back on all the years we had been together, and I concluded that after all it might be possible. Certainly, Annie had given no very marked evidence of her love; but then she was not a demonstrative girl. A quiet lowering of the eyelids, a little pink blush, were more in her line.

And then of late she had sorely changed. I had noticed that, and wondered a bit; now the meaning of it seemed clear. Annie, my little cousin Annie, whom I had ever regarded as a sister and a child, had developed into a woman, and was capable of feeling a woman's love.

My thoughts turned from Annie to myself: I began to analyse my own feelings, and to pronounce upon them. Did I love Annie? Yes, in one sense; no, in another. Yet my

affection for her was of that strong, deep nature that I might have mistaken it for love, if that one all-absorbing episode of my school days had never been. Even then, after a lapse of years, the thought of Madeline made my blood tingle in my veins, and my heart beat painfully. Of all this the old people knew nothing; they had evidently made up their minds that Annie and I were exactly suited to one another, and ought to be man and wife. Whether or not I was glad or sorry at this discovery I could not tell, my feelings were a strange mixture which I could not analyse.

Before I had time to think very deeply on the subject, the kitchen door opened, and Annie herself appeared on the threshold. Though it was dark out of doors, the light in the kitchen showed her to me distinctly. She wore a long black cloak, which she folded tightly around her shoulders; its hood covered her head.

'I am going down to the village. I shan't be long,' I heard her say, in answer to her mother's question. Then she came out, closing the kitchen door after her.

She paused a moment outside; then she hurried away—I, rather aimlessly, following her. She crossed the high road which led to the village, and took instead a narrow footpath which led by a short cut to the mine. Wondering what could be taking her that way, I continued to follow her.

She quickened her pace now, almost to a run. When she had got about half-way to the mine, she turned off again, and hastened along with increased speed towards Greystock Tower.

Greystock Tower was a ruin, consisting of three dilapidated ivy-covered walls and a buttress; it stood on an eminence a few hundred yards from the seashore, and by the

superstitious inhabitants of the village was supposed to be haunted. Even Annie, I had suspected till that night, shared in the popular belief. I was the more astonished, therefore, to see her going towards it, alone, on a dark night, and as if her very life depended upon her speed.

Having reached the ruin, she paused, and stood as if listening. There was a dead silence all round, broken only by the washing of the sea. I crept up in the shadow of the ruin.

Presently, I heard a peculiar whistle. Annie said softly :

'Yes—I am here.' Then a figure, that of a man, emerged from the darkness and joined her.

My astonishment at all this was so great that for a time I was utterly unable to move ; but, from my shadowy hiding-place I watched the pair. Who the man was I could not tell,

the darkness completely concealing his features ; but I saw that he was taller than Annie, and that he was smoking a cigar.

They stood close together, talking earnestly ; but I could not catch a word of what they said. Presently, they began to move away, and I deemed it time to interfere.

In two strides I was between them— Annie uttered a scream, the man an oath. But he stood his ground, and looked into my face.

It was now my turn to utter an exclamation. The man was young Redruth, the master of the mine.

The *contretemps* was so complete that for a moment neither of us spoke. Redruth, being the coolest, was the first to speak.

'What are you doing here, Trelawney?' he asked curtly.

'I am here to take my cousin home, sir,' I replied.

'Indeed,' he sneered; 'I should have thought you were here to play the spy!'

'Even that would be better than playing the villain,' I returned.

Here Annie, seeing a storm brewing, interfered.

'Hugh, dear Hugh!' she said, plucking at my sleeve.

But young Redruth now stepped forward.

'Don't agitate yourself, Annie,' said he, coolly, while I was ready to knock him down. 'And you, sir,' he added, addressing me, 'stand out of the way; I have business with this young lady, and I request you to leave us.'

'And if I refuse?'

He raised a small cane which he carried and struck me across the shoulders. In a

moment I had wrenched it from his hand, and with one well-planted blow I would have made him measure his length upon the ground, but, with another scream, Annie rushed forward and stood between us.

'You shall pay for this, you scoundrel!' said my master; and, without another word, he disappeared into the darkness.

Annie, still frightened and trembling, rushed forward to follow him, but in a moment I was beside her.

'You'll come with me, Annie,' I said, taking her hand firmly in mine.

By this time she was crying bitterly. 'Oh, Hugh,' she sobbed, 'what have you done! You will ruin us all—yourself, father, and all of us!'

But I took no heed of her, I kept my hold upon her, and led her back across the meadows to the cottage.

During the walk no word passed between us. I was silent, expecting she would give some explanation of the scene I had witnessed; but as she volunteered none, I said nothing. When we reached the cottage gate, she paused, and spoke.

'Hugh,' she said, 'you won't tell mother or father——'

'No, no,' I interrupted her. 'Don't fear for me, but I mean to look after you in the future, Annie.'

'Don't be hard on me, Hugh,' she said, piteously. 'I meant no harm. But it will be better for you and father if I speak to the young master sometimes.'

'You'd best let us manage our own affairs, Annie, and keep yourself to the house; always remember that.'

She dried her eyes and composed herself a bit, and we went in together.

The old couple were astonished, but not ill-pleased at seeing us in company. They noticed Annie's pallor, too, and exchanged looks, the meaning of which I now knew full well. I dreaded to be questioned; so when Annie had gone to her room, which she did pretty quickly, I explained that I had returned for certain little account-books, and having met Annie by the way, had brought her in. Then I possessed myself of the books, and hurried back to the office to finish my night's work.

CHAPTER IX.

ANNIE'S CONFESSION.

They were all in bed when I got back that night; but as I passed the door of Annie's room I fancied I heard the sound of sobbing. I knocked softly, but she made no answer; so I concluded that I must have been mistaken and that she was asleep.

The next morning she attended at breakfast as usual. She looked a little pale, and now and again glanced uneasily and rather questioningly at me. When I rose to go, she put on her bonnet, saying:

'I am going a bit of the way with Hugh,

mother;' and then, somewhat to my surprise, she came along with me into the road. When we were fairly away from the houses, and passing across the moor, she put her hand on my arm, and said softly :

'Hugh, dear Hugh, I have been out before this morning. I have seen the young master.'

I suppose my face darkened ominously, for she hurriedly continued :

'Hugh, you must not get angry—indeed, you must not. I did it for the best. I was afraid, after what happened last night, that he would dismiss you ; and he would have done, but I have interceded, and now all will be as it was before.'

'You have interceded for *me*!' I said. 'Then you were wrong, Annie ; if he wishes to dismiss me, let him. I have other means of earning my bread.'

For answer to this Annie employed a

stronger medium than words—she cried. Now, tears always disarm me; all I could do was what I did: soothe my cousin, kiss her pretty cheek, call myself a brute, and avow that she was the dearest, sweetest little woman in the world. Under this process, Annie came round, and smiled sadly up at me through her tears.

'You promise,' she said, 'to go on just the same as usual, and to take no notice of what occurred last night?'

'I will promise,' I said, 'if you can show me the good of it.'

'The good of it will depend upon whether or not you care anything about me!' she replied. 'Just think, Hugh, if you two quarrel again, and you are dismissed, everybody will know why it all came about—and my mother and father too. Ah, Hugh, dear Hugh, for my sake!'

She folded her little hands over my arm,

and looked up into my face like a supplicating child.

As I looked down into her bright eyes, now fast filling again with tears, the thought came into my mind to do what her mother and father wished me to do. 'Annie,' I thought of saying, 'give *me* a right to protect you. Let me call you wife, and I will agree to all you say.' But something held me, and the golden moment passed.

'All right, Annie,' I said; 'don't worry yourself, little woman. I won't do a thing that will injure *you*.'

For a couple of days or so the master kept away, and things went on at the works pretty much the same as usual; but on the fourth day he strolled down. He talked a good deal to Johnson, but never addressed one word to me. He looked at me, however, and the look he gave made me wonder what strange influence

Annie possessed when she could induce him to keep in his employment one whom he so cordially hated. I, however, took no notice, since I had given my promise to Annie, and an onlooker would never have guessed that anything sinister was going on.

How long this state of things might have lasted it is impossible to say, but it was most unexpectedly and suddenly changed.

One day my aunt, having a little shopping to do, and eager perhaps for a day's outing, determined to go to Falmouth. She started off in the morning in John Rudd's waggon, and left my cousin to keep house.

Now, it had seemed to me that Annie had looked particularly dull that morning; so, towards afternoon, I determined to take an hour, and to hurry back to the cottage to see how she was getting on.

As I drew near to the cottage door, I was

astonished to hear voices—the one loud and angry, the other soft and pleading. When I entered the kitchen, my amazement increased tenfold.

An elderly lady—none other, indeed, than old Mrs. Redruth, George Redruth's widowed mother—was standing in the middle of the room, while my cousin Annie, crying bitterly, was actually on her knees before her!

Mrs. Redruth had two characteristics, her confirmed ill-health and her iron will. Her power in the village was great; but she was feared, rather than beloved. Indeed, it was averred by many that every hard deed committed by either her husband or her son might have been traced to her influence. For the rest, she was a tall thin woman, with powerful aquiline features and a face of ghastly pallor.

Amazed at her presence there, I entered unceremoniously; but both were so intent

upon themselves that they were actually unaware of my approach.

The old woman was speaking.

'Your tears don't deceive me,' she said. 'I am not a man and a fool. I am a mother, and I know when danger threatens my child, and I say that you are doing your best to entangle my son. But take care. George Redruth shall not be sacrificed; sooner than that, I will ruin you—do you hear?—ruin *you*!'

'Oh, my lady!' sobbed Annie, 'will you listen!'

'No,' she returned, 'I will not! Listen to *you*—when every word you utter must be a lie! I have seen you with my son. Cease to follow him, or I will expose you before every soul in the village!'

She turned to leave the cottage, and came face-to-face with me. She paused abruptly,

opened her lips, as if about to speak; then she changed her mind, and without uttering a word passed out.

As for myself, I had been too much stupefied to say a word, and I stood now, like a great bear, looking at my cousin, who, sobbing piteously, had sunk into a chair. Then suddenly, while gazing at her thus, it seemed to me that the time had come for me to speak. I went up to her, raised her from the chair, and folded her in my arms.

'Annie,' I said, 'Annie, my dear, let there be an end to this. Give *me* the right to protect you from all this trouble that has come upon you lately. Become my wife.'

She started, and stared at me like a frightened child.

'Your wife, Hugh!' she said. 'Your wife!

'Yes, Annie,' I answered. 'My wife—

that is, if you care for me enough, my dear!'

At this she fell to crying afresh, and clung to me tenderly.

'Ah, Hugh, dear Hugh!' she sobbed. 'You are the kindest and best man in all the world, and it is your kindness which makes you ask me this now, for you don't *love* me, Hugh.'

Her words cut me to the heart, for I felt their truth.

'Perhaps,' I said. 'I don't romance as some young fellows might, but I shall make as good a husband. I have always been fond of you, Annie, ever since that night, years ago, when I first came here and you gave me a welcome. We have ever been excellent friends, haven't we?—and now tell me if we shall be more than friends?'

She shook her head.

'No, Hugh; be what you have always been—my own dear brother.'

'Is it because you think I don't care for you, Annie?'

'Ah, no!' she replied. 'Don't think it is that. So much the better for you, dear, that you don't love me: for even if it were otherwise, we two could never be man and wife.'

I looked into her eyes, and I thought I read their meaning. Annie did not care for me; her heart was with another man, and that man far above her.

I think I see those who read these lines smiling at my ignorance or my folly, and asking, was it possible that all I had seen or heard awakened in my mind no suspicion of any darker wrong lurking in my little cousin's path? Yes; it was quite possible. Grown man as I was, I had no experience whatever of

the world. I would have trusted Annie in any company, or in any place, and I never dreamed for a moment that there could be any danger to one so good.

As my thought travels back to that time, I reproach myself again and again for my own blindness. What worlds of sorrow it would have saved if I had been less unsuspicious—if I had only loved poor Annie more!

CHAPTER X.

THE LETTER.

But after this I watched Annie a good deal, and I soon discovered she had a great and growing trouble on her mind. She was restless and ill at ease, and once or twice, while I observed her quietly, I saw tears suddenly start to her eyes.

Her mother and father noticed this, too; but they attributed the change to quite another cause. They were good, honest folk, who could only consider one project at a time; and as for several months past their minds had been occupied solely with the idea of a marriage

between Annie and myself, they naturally assumed disagreements between us two to be the cause of their daughter's depression.

I had not the heart to undeceive them. I determined, however, to speak to Annie again, and ask for some further explanation of this mystery.

One afternoon, about three days after our former interview, I was standing at the mouth of the mine, thinking things, when I was startled by the sudden appearance of my aunt. She looked pale; rather alarmed; but ready to become very angry.

'Hugh!' she said, before I had time to open my lips, 'where be Awnie?'

Had I been able at that moment to produce my cousin, she would certainly have been rated very soundly; whereas, I shook my head and said, 'I don't know!' the rising anger entirely disappeared, and her face grew paler.

'But you'm seen her to-day?' she continued.

'No. When I left this morning you were all a-bed.'

At this my aunt fairly broke down, and moaned between her sobs, 'Oh, Hugh! she's gone, gone!'

I was fairly stunned, and all I could do just then was to comfort my aunt, who was weeping bitterly. When she was more composed, I asked for an explanation of what had taken place, and she gave it. The facts were simple enough. After my uncle and I had left for the mine, my aunt rose, expecting to find the kitchen fire alight as usual, and Annie busy making things neat for the day. To her astonishment, the kitchen was empty, the ashes in the grate were grey, and all was in disorder as it had been on the night before. She called Annie, but got no answer; she searched the

cottage, but failed to find her; then, concluding that she had gone to the village on some errand, she set about doing the work herself. Several hours passed away; and, as there was still no sign of the missing girl, my aunt began to grow extremely alarmed. She had searched through and around the house with no effect. She now went down to the village and made several inquiries, but with no result. Annie had not been seen by anyone that day.

Seriously alarmed by this time, she returned to the house, and looked again in Annie's room. Suddenly, her attention was attracted to the bed; she looked at it, and found that, although it was in disorder, it had not been slept in that night.

Having told her tale, my aunt looked at me, hoping that I might be able to say her fears for her child were unfounded. I could not; the utmost I could do was to counsel

silence, and to try to buoy her up with hope. This I did.

'It may be all right, aunt,' I said; 'therefore it will be much better to keep our fears to ourselves. Don't say anything to my uncle; there will be time enough to do that when our last hope is gone.'

After some little difficulty, she consented to follow my advice, and I persuaded her to return home. But the day was finished for me. After my aunt was gone, I could do nothing but think of Annie; the worst fears struggled to take possession of me, but I diligently thrust them away. I would not believe ill of my cousin.

About five o'clock, my uncle came up from the mine, and I proposed that we should knock off work for the day, and stroll home together. My uncle was in singularly good spirits, and during our walk home he frequently checked

his mirth, avowing 'twas unnatural, and that something ill would come of it. As we drew near to the cottage, my heart beat painfully, and when we went in I looked anxiously about me.

My aunt was moving about preparing tea, and she was alone.

'Whar be the little woman?' asked my uncle, as we sat down to our meal.

I saw my aunt's face grow very pale, but she turned her head away and answered as carelessly as possible:

'She be gawn out!'

'Beant she coming in to tae?'

'Naw!'

The answer was conclusive, and the meal went on; my uncle eating heartily, while I was scarcely able to sip my cup of tea. When the meal was over, my uncle, according to his usual custom, went to his seat beside the fire, and lit his pipe.

He had been smoking for an hour or more, when a scene occurred which I cannot recall without pain even now. All signs of the meal had been cleared away, and my aunt, with trembling hand, was about to lift down her work-basket from its shelf, when a knock came to the kitchen door; then the door was opened, and in came John Rudd.

He had a parcel for my aunt, which he delivered; he chatted for a few minutes, then he prepared to go.

His hand was on the latch of the door, when he paused and looked back:

'Say, missus,' said he, 'whar be Miss Awnie gawn to?'

My uncle looked up curiously; my aunt's cheeks grew as white as new-fallen snow.

'Whar be she gawn to?' she repeated, helplessly.

'Iss!' continued Rudd, 'I seen her this

marning i' Falmouth, but she were in a mighty hurry and didn't see me. She were dawn on the jatty, and she went aboard the steamer for Partsmouth.'

Mr. Rudd paused, thunderstruck at the effect of his words.

My aunt, thoroughly exhausted by the strain that had been put upon her that day, sank, sobbing and moaning, into a chair; my uncle, who had risen from his seat, stood glaring from one to another.

Presently he spoke.

'What be all this about my Awnie?' he cried. 'Speak, some 'un.'

My aunt continued to sob, John Rudd stared in a mystified manner at one and all.

'There's nothing to alarm anybody,' I said; 'it's all right.'

But my uncle, who was growing terribly excited, hardly seemed to hear me.

'If thar be aught wrong wi' my little woman,' he cried, 'tell me; I aint a child to be petted, nor a fool to be kept i' the dark. Speak, tell me what 'tis all about!'

So we told him all we knew, and, putting this and that together, he gathered at least one idea—that his child had, for some reason or other, voluntarily left her home. He stood like a man stupefied, scarcely gathering the sense of the situation, and dimly wondering why his wife received the news so violently. In his simplicity, he did not guess, as yet, that Annie's flight might have its origin in secret guilt and shame.

But when John Rudd was gone, and we were left to ourselves, I looked at my uncle and aunt, both so changed within the last few hours, and told them my suspicions of George Redruth. To my surprise they were received with blank amazement, then with indignation.

My uncle averred that I had always disliked the young master, and it was but natural I should credit him with a dastardly deed; but he himself refused to believe for one moment in the young man's guilt. I felt convinced of it, however, in my own mind; and in order to make sure, I determined to go up to the master's house and ascertain if he were from home.

The moment my uncle heard of my determination he resolved to accompany me. On asking for the master, we were shown into the library; five minutes later the young man himself walked into the room.

The sight of him deprived me utterly of the power of speech; my uncle looked at me reproachfully, and was silent too.

George Redruth, who had just been dining, wore evening dress, and had never looked

handsomer, or more thoroughly at his ease, in his life.

'Well!' he said, glancing at us pleasantly —he was evidently in an after-dinner mood— 'is there anything I can do for either of you?'

'Master Jarge,' said my uncle, earnestly, 'we'm in trouble, sir; in sore trouble.'

'Indeed! I'm sorry to hear it.'

'I knawed you'd be sarry, sir,' continued my uncle, 'though 'taint no affair o' yourn, God knaws; but my daughter, sir, my little Annie, she be run'd away!'

'What!' he exclaimed. 'Run away from home, do you mean? But why come to me? What can *I* do?'

'Naught, you can't do naught at all,' said my uncle, 'that's just it.'

It was an awkward situation for us all, and we all felt it. My uncle nervously turned his hat round and round; while the young master

grew more and more uncomfortable as every minute went by. I felt that some explanation was demanded, and I gave it.

'The fact is, sir,' I said, 'there is some villain at the bottom of it, and we want to find out who that villain is.'

'And so you come to me! Really, I don't see the force of all this, and I have more important matters to detain me!'

He opened the door, and we, seeing that further conversation would be useless, left the room and the house.

During the walk home, my uncle never spoke. When we reached the cottage, he sank down into a chair, and hid his face in his hands.

Nothing more could be done that night, so we all went to bed; but not to sleep. During the night I frequently heard my uncle walking with measured step up and down his room, and

in the grey of the morning he came out to the kitchen to kindle a fire.

I looked at him, and scarcely knew him; his face was white and lined like that of an old man. He was quite calm; but there was a sad look in his eyes which spoke of deep-set pain.

I spoke to him of Annie, and told of a plan I had made to follow her and bring her back; but he sadly shook his head.

'Naw, lad,' said he, 'tis best left alawn; she went o' her awn free will, and maybe some day she'll come back; and till she does, we'll wait, we'll wait!'

I felt he was right; it was better to wait. Even if we had been rich folk, which we were not, it would have been difficult to find her; as it was, the matter was hopeless. So we went on as usual with the old life. And yet it was not the old life, for the house was

changed indeed—and there was ever one vacant chair.

Several days after that sad night, a letter came from Annie; it bore the London post-mark, and ran as follows:—

'My dear Parents,—Do not grieve about me, for I am quite well and in want of nothing. Do not attempt to find me, it would be useless; but I shall soon come back, with God's blessing, and then you will learn why I left without a word. I am sorry, so sorry, for any trouble I have given you, and hope you will forgive me, for the sake of the happy days that are gone away. Your loving daughter,

'ANNIE.'

My aunt read the letter aloud; then my uncle took it from her, looked at it for a long time, and finally, without a word, placed it on

the fire—watching it till it was consumed. After that, for a long time to come, he never spoke of Annie again; but he drooped daily, like a man under the weight of some mortal pain.

CHAPTER XI.

THE GREAT STORM.

It was now late in the year, and the winter storms were beginning. There were intervals of calm, cool weather, when the wind came from the east or south-east, and still frosty days, when a breath as cold as steel crept from the red sunrise of the north; but ever and again the trumpet of the tempest sounded westward and southward, and the ocean rose up before it in mountains of furious storm.

To stand on the seashore, or on the weather-worn cliffs, at such moments, was an experience not to be forgotten. With a sound of crashing thunder, with sheet-like flashes

of flying foam, the mighty billows came rolling in; while far away, in the eye of the wind, the clouds gathered and baleful rays came and went, as if from the under world. Again and again, during these storms, the men forsook their work in the mine and clustered on the wind-swept crags; for the sound beneath was too terrible, and at each crash of the waters overhead the solid roofs of rock seemed about to topple in.

A new lifeboat had come round from Falmouth during the summer; it was manned chiefly by workers in the mine, and I was their captain. We had tried the boat again and again in light weather, and were proud of her as life-boatsmen could be; so that, when need came, we were ready to do all that human hands could do for the succour of shipwrecked souls. Fortunately, few vessels came that way, to need our aid in time

of peril, for the great ships gave that lonely shore a wide berth, knowing its many perils. Sometimes, however, a coasting-vessel, heavily laden, came ashore on the outlying reefs, but, thanks to our sturdy boat, without much loss of life.

On the afternoon of the 22nd day of November, 18—, there occurred such a phenomenon as I have seen only once in my life, and scarcely expect to see again. The ocean was dead calm and black as ink; the sooty clouds, with sheets of windless vapour trailing right down to the earth and water, kept stationary in a sort of sinister twilight; and the air was full of an extraordinary stillness, in which the concussion of the slightest sound—a cock crowing, a goat bleating, a human voice crying—was heard for miles away.

I had just been down the mine, where

I found the men had ceased working, and had gathered in knots, whispering together. For all through the dark galleries and passages there came, from time to time, a curious tremor, like the shock of earthquake—sullen, sinister, terrible, making the heart, for some unknown reason, stand still with fear. Nor was this sound to be accounted for by the dashing of waves above that subaqueous darkness, since there was not a breath of wind, and the sea lay in sullen, moveless folds, scarcely vibrating.

'What is it, my lads?' I had asked, accosting the first group of men, who were clustering on the central platform.

As I spoke, the tremor came again, so that the walls seemed tumbling over, the hard ground rocking under me, with a vibration which seemed to send a nameless terror into my very blood.

My uncle, who was there with the others, shook his head ominously.

'We dawn't rightly knaw,' he said; 'but we ha' hard 'un again and again, sounding like that. Seems threatening like, and I ha' bidden the gang knock off wark for to-day.'

I knew that it was useless to remonstrate, for the men were evidently full of superstitious dread, which, if the truth must be told, I could not help sharing. They threw down their pickaxes and shovels, and followed me up the shaft.

We found Johnson there, who seemed astonished at our appearance, and, when I told him what had taken place, looked savage.

'You're spoiling the men, Trelawney,' he said. 'Guess such nervous fancies are only fit for an old woman. Why, the sea 's like

a mill-pond, and there aint a breath of wind.'

'If you think it's only fancy,' I replied, 'come down with me and try. I'll give you a five-pound note if you stop down there half an hour.'

He shrank back and shook his head angrily, while the men clustering round us, greeted my speech with a laugh.

'I shall report this,' he cried, viciously. 'A pack of cowards!'

And he walked off, amid an angry murmur from the men, who detested him cordially.

As the afternoon passed, and the dull leaden twilight increased, we saw, looking seaward, the phenomenon to which I have alluded: *two* suns, one round and purple, the other pink and ghostly, floating in the vapours to the west. Both were quite rayless,

and they hung as it were some fifty yards from each other. Both seemed so near to us that one would have thought it possible to reach them with a bullet from a gun.

I cannot express in words the strangely depressing and vaguely alarming effect of this phenomenon on myself and all who witnessed it. Nor was the effect lessened when the dimmer of the two suns suddenly disappeared, and the other changed in a moment from purple to jet black. A jet black ball in the midst of a waste of leaden grey.

'Lawd save us!' cried Martin Treruddock, an old fisherman, and one of our lifeboat's crew. 'Lawd save us! It looks like judgment, mates—like the Last Day!'

This, indeed, was the thought which was passing through all our minds. We stood looking in suspense till the black sun disappeared, and total darkness came; and then,

with no little foreboding, we scattered to our homes.

But in the night, as we lay sleeping in our beds, we learned that what we had witnessed betokened, not any supernatural disturbance, but the gathering of such a tempest as has seldom been seen, before or since, on those shores. It came with fearful lightning and close-following thunder, followed by drops of black and hideous hail; and then, with a crash and a scream and cry, the wind rushed from the sea. I lay in my bed in the cottage, thinking every moment that the house would come down, shaking as it did to its foundations, or the roof be blown away; and every minute the blasts grew more terrific, not coming in broken gusts as during ordinary storms, but in concussions of solid air, which struck the walls with blows as of a battering

ram, and made every stone in the structure clatter like a loose tooth.

Presently, I saw my uncle, partially dressed and holding a light, enter my chamber.

'Hugh, my lad, be you asleep?'

'As if anyone could sleep on such a night! I thought yesterday's portent meant something. The storm has come!'

'Mother be frighted badly,' he returned. 'She be praying, lad, dawn i' the kitchen. Lawd save us; hark to that!' he added, as a flash of fiery lightning filled the room, and wind and thunder mingled together in awful reverberation.

There was no resting in bed, so I slipped on my clothes and went down with my uncle to the kitchen, where I found my aunt full of superstitious terror. She had got out the old Bible, and, having opened at random, was reading in a low voice from one of the Psalms.

I did my best to allay her fears, but succeeded very badly.

For the greater part of the night we remained sitting up. The thunder and lightning lasted well on till morning, and when they ceased, it became possible for the first time to realise the frightful violence of the gale. It was, as I afterwards learned, a well-defined cyclone.

With the first peep of daylight, I seized my hat and moved to the door.

'Whar be'st gawing, lad?' cried my aunt.

'Down to the shore. It's a high spring-tide, and I want to see if the life-boat's snug.'

'Na, na,' she cried, 'stawp yar!'

But I only smiled at her fears, and hastened away. No sooner had I left the cottage than the wind caught me, and almost dashed me from my feet; but I stooped my head, and plunged right on in the teeth of the gale. The

day was now breaking, with lurid sullen rays, behind my back. Short as the distance was to the seashore, I thought I should never reach it, so terrible was the fury of the blast! More than once I had actually to lie down on the ground, and let it trample over me! And with the blast came hail and heavy rain, blinding me, smiting my cheek like whipcord, and drawing blood, so that I could scarcely see a yard before my face.

At last I gained the cliff, and here I had much ado to prevent myself from being lifted up bodily and blown away. But I threw myself on my face, and looked seaward. Nothing was visible, only driving mists and vapours; but right below there was a blinding whiteness of the line of breakers, and thence there rose up to me, together with the wild wisps of solid wind-swept water, the deafen-

ing thunder-roar of the tumultuously surging sea.

Gaining courage presently, as the light in the east grew clearer, I crawled down the path leading to the shore. As I went, I was sometimes flattened like a rag against the rocks, by the sheer force of the wind; but I persevered, and at last, with God's help, reached the bottom.

It was high tide; the roaring billows were thundering up close to the cliff, and the shallow creek surrounding the boat-house was as white as milk with the churning of the waters. I then perceived, to my consternation, that the gale had struck the boat-house with such force as to sweep the wooden roof away and dash it into fragments against the cliffs. I crept on to the door, which was on the lee and sheltered side, drew forth from my pocket the key of the padlock, opened it, and went in. The great

boat lay there unharmed, but was half full of water, fresh from the dark rain-clouds, salt from the angry sea. One of the oars had been lifted out and snapped like a rotten twig, but that was all.

Suddenly, as I stood here sheltering from the gale, I heard a sound from seaward, like the sound of a gun. I started, listening. In a minute the sound was repeated. Yes; it was a gun at sea, and the sound could have only one signification—a vessel in distress!

Quitting the boat-house, I stood on the shore, and strained my eyes against the drifting vapours and blinding wind; but I could distinguish nothing—indeed, so great was the rainy darkness, that my vision could not penetrate beyond twenty or thirty yards from the storm-swept shore. But if I needed any fresh assurance that a ship of some sort was struggling with the elements not far away, it came to me

in another faint report of a gun, and finally, in the red light of a rocket, which shot up through the black vapours like a shooting star, and disappeared.

CHAPTER XII.

THE SURVIVORS OF THE WRECK.

Quitting the storm-swept shore, I climbed half-way up the crags, and endeavoured, with straining eyes, to penetrate the darkness seaward; but although it was now broad day, the clouds of wind-blown vapour still covered the troubled sea.

Greatly agitated, I made my way up the cliff, and reached the summit, where I found that an excited group, composed of fishermen and miners, had already gathered. Among them was my uncle, who addressed me eagerly the moment I appeared.

'Did you say the lights, lad? Sure as

death, there be a ship on the rocks out thar.'

'On the South Stack,' said an old fisherman, naming an ugly reef which lay right across the mouth of the bay, three-quarters of a mile from shore.

'Are you sure she's there?' I asked, eagerly.

'Sure enough,' was the reply. 'When the last light went oop, I saw 'un—leastways, summat black amang the mist and foam.'

There was nothing for it but to wait and watch; for to go to the rescue in the teeth of such a storm was out of the question, even if we had been able to launch the lifeboat through the billows madly breaking on the shore. The wind still blew with extraordinary fury, though signs were not wanting that its strength was partially broken; and still, with thunderous roar, the waves came rolling in, sending up a cloud

of white foam that reached to the very summit of the cliff where we were crouching; and still, trailing as it were on the waves and belching hither and thither, like thick smoke from a furnace, the mist came driving shoreward, blotting the sea from sight.

From time to time the gun sounded again; then it ceased altogether; and no more rockets rose, to indicate the whereabouts of the hidden vessel. Was all over? Had the cruel seas devoured her, with the helpless souls on board? Sick with suspense, we waited and watched almost certain that the last appeal had been made, and that all was over.

Suddenly, the storm-smoke blew upward here and there, leaving visible wild patches of tossing water. Simultaneously, the wind lessened, coming not in solid phalanx, but in gusts, fitful though terrible—very cannon blasts of air.

A wild cry rose, and all hands were suddenly pointed seaward.

Then, straining my eyes through the blinding rain, I saw something like a white wall of vapour rising right out to sea in the direction of the South Stack, and right in its centre the black outline of a large vessel, wedged firmly on the jagged rocks. For a moment she was visible, then the vapours blotted her once more from sight. A minute afterwards, she was again visible, this time more distinctly, so that I could clearly discern a black funnel and two masts, a mainmast intact, a foremast broken off just above the decks. She was a large screw-steamer, with her back broken right across, and only saved from sinking by the very rocks which had destroyed her.

How she had got into that fatal position it was difficult to tell. Possibly her propeller

had snapped, as is not uncommon with such vessels, or the water had swamped her engines and put them out; in either of which cases, seeing how little sail she would be able to carry at the best, it had been a vain task to attempt to beat off a lee shore in the face of such a gale.

She was so far away, and the mists were still so troublesome, that it was difficult to tell if there were any souls still left on board. More than once I fancied that I discerned shapes like human forms clinging to or lashed to the rigging of the mainmast, but it was impossible to distinguish them with any certainty.

However, my mind was now made up. The lifeboat must be launched and manned without delay. I turned to the men and said as much, but they shrank back in unconcealed terror at the mere proposition. And, indeed, it seemed

a hopeless affair! Although the wind had certainly fallen a little, its falling seemed to augment, rather than to lessen, the fury of the sea. The waters between us and the vessel were terrible even to look upon; and it seemed impossible that even a lifeboat could live among them. Even if she lived, how could the strength of men propel her right in the teeth of the tempest?

While the men stood hesitating, the mists rose all round the ship, and we saw, to our amazement, that a stir was taking place upon her decks. Yes; there could be no doubt of the fact; a boat was preparing to leave her sides, and, freighted with human beings, push away for the shore.

Never shall I forget that sight! Just in the lee of the crippled vessel, under the cloud of white smoke which rose for a moment high above her remaining mast, there was a heaving

patch where the boat could float in safety; but beyond it, and nearer to us the waves rose again in awful crested billows whirling and swirling towards the shore. Seen from our point of vantage, the boat seemed a mere cockle-shell; but we saw the tiny specks crowding into it, while the broken water streamed like milk over the vessel's decks and down her shoreward sides.

'God help them!' I cried aloud, and more than one voice echoed my prayer.

The boat pushed off. The under-swell caught her and rushed her along at lightning speed, and in a few moments she reached the broken water. There the wind seemed to smite her sidelong, and she was buried instantaneously in the trough of the sea. But she reappeared, half smothered in surf and flying foam. Then we saw, rapidly approaching her, a mountainous and awful wave!

The little boat, as if it were a living thing, seemed to see it too, and to struggle to escape! Sick with horror, I covered my eyes; I could not look. Then I heard a deep groan from the men around me, and looked again.

The boat had gone, never to reappear. The mighty wave had broken and was roaring shoreward, and amid its foam I saw, or seemed to see, shapes that struggled, sank, and died.

'Man the lifeboat!' I cried. 'Quick, lads! Follow me!'

My uncle gripped me by the arm.

'Too late, lad! There's ne'er a sawl aboard!'

'Look yonder!' I answered, pointing seaward. 'There are living men on the deck still, and in the rigging. Come!'

The lads, who were English born and had their hearts in the right places, responded with

a cheer, and down the path we rushed till we reached the shore. Entering the boat-house, we soon had the boat baled and ready for launching, when I first realised, to my dismay, that we were short-handed, several of my best men being away. But two strong lads from the mine volunteered, and my uncle made a third; and so we formed a crew. To every man I gave a cork life-belt, and tied on one myself. Then, springing to my place in the stern, I urged on my men, as with shouts and yells, scarcely heard amid the roar of water, they ran the boat into the creek.

Each man knew his place. They urged the boat, bow forward, into the surge, and waded with it, those the furthest from shore wading breast-deep in the waves. Thrice we were beaten back, and I thought the boat would have been crushed to pieces on the beach, but at last she floated—the men leaped

in and took their places—the oars smote the boiling surge, and out we crept to sea.

Once fairly afloat, we realised for the first time the strength and fury of the storm. Clouds of flying foam covered us, the strong seas caught the oars and almost tore them from the grasp, and for a time we scarcely seemed to gain a foot of way. But the lads put out their strength, and sheer muscle and bold heroic will conquering at last, the life-boat left the shore.

And now I alone, standing in the stern-sheets, with the steering oar in my hand, could see what mountainous seas we had to pass before we could reach the doomed vessel, which was now scarcely discernible through the sheet of low-flying spray. As some great wave came near, curling high above us, I cheered on the men, and we met it with a shock like thunder and a rattle of every plank

of which the boat was made. More than once the seas made a clean breach over us, but the air-tight compartments and cushions of cork kept us from actually foundering. On we went, with the light of the kindling east turning from red to reddish-gold behind us, and the mists, struck by the new radiance, thinning to seaward; and so, after a fierce tussle with wind and water, we came in full sight of the doomed vessel.

Stuck fast on the cruel reef, her back broken, she was struggling like a crippled bird—lying over, with her decks and funnel inclined towards the shore, and quivering through and through with every blow of the strong metallic waves. A pillar of smoky foam, ever vanishing, ever renewed, hung over her in the air, and from time to time the waters foamed over her weather side, and streamed over the splitting decks.

At first I could discern no sign of life, but as we drew nearer and nearer, I saw one or two figures clinging in the rigging, from which many of their comrades had doubtless been washed away. They saw us coming, for one of them waved something white.

'Pull for your lives!' I cried. 'There are men aboard!'

The lads answered me with a cheer, and the boat shot forward to the steady sweep of their united oars till we were within a hundred yards of the steamer.

Then I saw a sight which filled all my soul with fear and pity. Lashed to, or clinging to, the mainmast, was the solitary figure of a woman. I knew her sex by the wild hair falling over her shoulders, and the curious feminine grace of her form, visible through a dark cloak that had been thrown hastily upon her shoulders; but her head was droop-

ing and her face hidden, and she did not seem conscious of what was taking place.

I told the men that a woman was there, and though they needed no new incentive to give them strength, their faces grew more animated, and I knew they would have faced fire as well as water in such a cause. In a few minutes more we were close at hand, rising and falling on the white surge in the vessel's lee.

Then the woman raised her head, and looked in our direction. The men saw her, and gave another cheer; but I—I could have swooned away in consternation. My head went round. I looked again and again.

Either I was mad, or dreaming, or the face I gazed upon was that of the love of my boyhood—Madeline Graham!

CHAPTER XIII.

MADELINE GRAHAM.

Yes; I knew her in a moment.

The lurid light of the tempestuous morning shone full upon her face, and on the clinging dress and cloak, which more expressed than hid her lovely form. Her eyes were wildly fixed, her face pale as death; but in her features there was a splendid self-possession far removed from common fear.

Though so many years had passed since we had last met, she was still the same; only taller and more womanly, and even more strangely beautiful than when she had first shed love and rapture on my boyish heart.

She was fastened to the mast by a rope. Her feet were bare, and I saw, to my horror, that all she wore save the great fur cloak was a night-dress of white cotton, reaching to her feet. Her hair fell over her shoulders in loose and dripping folds, descending almost to her waist. Peering more closely, I perceived that her lips were blue, and her form shivering with cold; indeed, it was a miracle that she had not perished in the chill of that cruel night.

From that moment I saw nothing but that one figure; all others were blurred and practically unseen. In my wild amazement and eagerness to reach her, I could have sprung into the tossing waves.

The vessel lay sidelong, her decks turned towards the shore; and the fierce billows, striking her seaward sides, broke with a thunderous roar and a cloud of spray, and then

came surging down the slippery decks in a thin sheet of foam, boiling round the naked feet of the solitary maiden.

We hung off for a minute, to let one great sea go by; then we swept alongside. What followed was more like a dream than waking reality. But with an eager cry I leapt upon the deck, and staggered up towards Madeline Graham

Twice I slipped to my knees, and was driven back and bruised against the bulwarks; but the third time I succeeded, and, reaching her side, clung to the mast, and gazed into her face.

'Madeline!' I cried.

Her eyes met mine, but she gave no sign of recognition. It was clear that what I remembered so vividly she had utterly forgotten.

Drawing my clasp-knife, I cut her free, and

put my arms around her to bear her back to the boat. The decks rocked and split beneath us; she clung to me, as if in terror. Then I watched my chance, and, raising her bodily in my arms, carried her to the vessel's side, and handed her to the men.

I was about to follow her, when I was attracted by a wild scream, and, turning, I perceived the figure of another woman crawling on the deck, close to the companion. She was dark-complexioned, like a mulatto, and almost naked. Without a moment's hesitation, I ran to her, and half lifted, half dragged her, to the vessel's side.

I now perceived that we had saved, in addition to the two women, two white seamen and a black man, who afterwards turned out to be the ship's cook. I clung to the bulwarks, and looked round, searching for any other signs of life.

'Come, lad, come!' cried my uncle. 'Quick! the ship's breaking up!'

I looked at the strange sailors, who sat shivering in the bottom of the lifeboat.

'Are there no more souls aboard?' I cried.

'Not one,' they answered. All the rest had perished in the long-boat, in the fatal attempt to reach the shore.

There was not a moment to be lost. The vessel was evidently doomed, and every shock of the sea threatened to complete the work of destruction. The black funnel, almost wrenched out of the bursting decks, was leaning over terribly, and threatening every moment to crash down bodily and destroy the lifeboat.

I leapt in, and scrambled to my place in the stern. On the seat close by me was Madeline, her eyes half closed, her neck resting on the

gunnel; and at her feet was the coloured woman, moaning and crying.

It was but the work of a moment to strip off my pilot-coat and wrap it round Madeline's half-naked limbs; but while I did so the men cried impatiently, and pushed off.

'Give way, lads!' I cried. 'Now! Pull for your lives!'

Away we went through the surging sea. Not a moment too soon did we leave the vessel; for ere we were thirty yards away the decks were rent asunder, and the huge funnel toppled over and fell like a battering ram upon the bulwarks, which broke like tinder beneath the blow.

With wind and sea to urge us on, we flew shoreward, and the strength of the oarsmen was needed rather to break than to increase our lightning speed. Again and again the great seas rose behind and threatened to engulf

us; while gripping the steering oar I watched them, and guided the brave boat.

At last we approached the shore, and saw a great crowd waiting upon the shingle and swarming upon the cliff. Tossing like a cork upon the waters, we waited our chance, and then, after one huge wave had spent itself, and there was a momentary surcease of the water's power, I headed the boat's bow for the creek, and we rowed in.

As the keel struck the sands, a dozen men rushed in waist-deep to seize the boat; our men joined them, and then, with a long pull, a strong pull, and a great ringing cheer, the boat was hauled high and dry, and we were safe.

My first thought was of Madeline. I lifted her out in my strong arms, and carried her into the shelter of the boat-house. Her face and hands were cold as ice, and she was still swoon-

ing. I called out for brandy; and thank God! a man handed me a full flask. Supporting her head upon my shoulder, I moistened her lips with the raw spirit, and once more, in my wild anxiety, I breathed her name.

Once more she opened her eyes and looked upon me; still there was no sign whatever of recognition.

She looked wildly round her, saw the rough but kindly faces on every side, and murmured:

'Where am I? Who calls me?'

'You are quite safe,' I cried; 'safe, and among friends.'

Again she looked up into my face, as if stupefied. I held the flask to her lips, and she seemed to swallow a little; then a shudder ran through her frame, and she released herself from my hold.

I placed her on one of the wooden seats, and bent over, tenderly watching her. Grad-

ually I saw the colour come back to her cheeks, but very faintly.

'Anita!' she murmured, and looked round as if seeking someone.

The rough fellows, clustering in the boat-house, murmured sympathisingly; whispered encomiums on her beauty passed from mouth to mouth. And indeed she looked strangely lovely, even in her desolation—her eyes brightening, her colour coming and going, her hair streaming over her shoulders, her neck and arms and feet as white as driven snow!

As her strength and consciousness returned, a new awe fell upon me, and I stood timidly watching her.

She gazed at me again.

'Now I understand,' she said. 'Tell me of the others; are they saved?'

I told her the truth, and again she shuddered, half closing her eyes, as if to shut out

the picture of the horrors of the wreck. At that moment some of the lifeboat's men appeared, leading with them the coloured woman, who, the instant she saw Madeline, sprang towards her and knelt by her side, hysterically sobbing, and kissing her hands.

Madeline bent over her and addressed her in some foreign tongue—Portuguese, I afterwards discovered. She answered volubly in the same speech. I suspected the truth, that this black girl was an attendant or waiting-maid of some sort, and that Madeline was her mistress.

Turning to one of the rescued sailors, who had now approached and was phlegmatically chewing a quid as if he had just been comfortably landed from a passing boat, I questioned him concerning the lost vessel. She was a large trading steamer, he said, bound from Demerara to the port of London; her name,

the 'Valparaiso;' her captain, one John Stetson, a good sailor, who had been killed by the falling of the foremast, and swept overboard. Her passage across the Atlantic had been smooth and pleasant; but the night before she had experienced all the strength of the great gale, and while contending with it had broken her propeller. After that, she had tried to lie-to under sail, and had she found sea-room would doubtless have been able to weather the storm; but as ill-luck would have it, the rocks of Cornwall were right under her lee, and the wind and sea swept her down upon them.

I questioned him concerning that episode of the boat. He explained that two of the boats had been smashed into fragments when the ship first struck. The long-boat remained, and at daybreak, after the captain perished, the first officer, fancying that the ship was doomed, determined to make for shore. All the crew

followed him but my informant and two others, who preferred sticking by the steamer to facing certain death. The men, in fact, were mad with fright and drink combined, and for this reason, perhaps, altogether forgot to wait for Madeline, who had gone below.

So the last boat left the ship. It had not gone far when Madeline reappeared. She would have been swept away but for the assistance of the sailors, who strapped her to the mast as the only chance of safety; and as she stood there terror-stricken, she saw the boat engulfed with all its crew—the same sad sight which we had seen from land.

It turned out, on further questioning, that Miss Graham was the only passenger, and occupied, with her coloured maid, the captain's own cabin. Her father, a rich Demerara planter, had died some months before she took passage, leaving her a great inheritance. I had

no time to answer for myself the many questions which crowded upon my mind—Why Madeline had come to England? Whether she had relations surviving in the old country? Whether any living person, lover or friend, had the right to protect her? But I looked at her again, and thought how different she was from all the other women I had known, in her queenly grace and warmth of beauty. Beside her, even my cousin Annie would have looked coarse and common.

But there was no time to be lost, if she was to escape the consequences of that night's exposure. She was still dripping wet, and the morning air was bitterly cold.

'You must not stay here,' I said, approaching her, 'or you will catch your death. Do you think you can ascend the cliffs? My aunt's cottage is close by, and I should like to take you there at once.'

She rose at once, shivering, and took my arm. Half leading, half supporting her, I guided her out of the boat-house and up the steep ascent leading to the summit of the crag, my uncle helping her upon the other side. Some of the others followed, leading the coloured girl.

It was a steep climb; and before we had gone far we found that her strength was failing her, so that we were compelled to raise her bodily in our arms; but she was light and fragile enough, and, for my own part, I could have carried her like a child.

Once on the summit, we rested again, while some of the men went in chase of a moor pony, one of several grazing on the moor hard by. When it was secured, and bridled and bitted with a stout rope, I lifted her upon it, and placed the black girl by her side; and thus, still holding her and walking by her side, while

the men followed behind like a procession, I conducted her to our cottage, and handed her over to the care of my kind aunt.

Thus God, in a mysterious fashion, had restored to me the being who had been to me for so many years a sweet memory and a delightful vision. I felt strangely happy, yet troubled; unable yet to realise what had taken place. When my aunt had led Madeline to a chamber upstairs, where she tended her with motherly sympathy and tenderness, I sat in the kitchen, waiting and wondering, like one in a dream.

CHAPTER XIV.

A SUNBEAM IN THE COTTAGE.

It seemed as if the days of my boyhood had come back to me. Never since then had I experienced such feelings as now filled my heart, for with her fading they had faded, and during the years of our separation I had passed my time with tolerable tranquillity; but now that she had been so miraculously restored to me, the old fire was rekindled in my soul, and I became another man.

Her very presence in the house that night drove away all thoughts of sleep. I paced my room with restless footsteps, and when the dawn broke I hurried off to the shore.

What a change had come! The wind had died, the sea was like glass, and the only record left of the storm was the wreckage which was being cast upon the sands. Early as I was, there were others before me, gazing eagerly seaward, and searching along the cliffs for a prize.

I took a walk round by the mine, and, having made a hasty inspection, I hurried back to the cottage, eagerly hoping, yet half dreading, to see Madeline. But I was disappointed. My uncle had gone to his work. My aunt was busy, but alone. I looked round the kitchen, and my heart gave a great throb. After all, the events of the past night were real. There, hanging beside the fire, was the cloak—a rich mantle of silk and fur—which had been clinging round Madeline's form when I took her from the wreck.

I inquired eagerly for Madeline. 'Have

you seen her, aunt?' I asked. 'Is she well? How does she look?'

I suppose there was something peculiar in my manner, for my aunt gazed at me curiously, and said:

'Who be she, Hugh? Dost knaw who she be?'

'Yes,' I replied; 'she is Miss Madeline Graham. She was at school with me long ago. Just before my father died she left, and I have never seen her since.'

At that moment the door opened, and the figure of the black woman appeared. In the light of day she looked foreign indeed—a slight, delicate girl, shivering with the cold of our raw climate. I asked her how her mistress did. She made no answer, but stared vacantly at me; and I then discovered that she knew no language but the one in which she had spoken to Madeline. I looked at my aunt, and she

understood—she went herself into the bedroom to see how her guest was getting on.

She was away only a few minutes, yet it seemed to me an hour. When she came back, she smiled at my anxious look.

'It be all right, lad, it be all right,' she said. 'The lady be awn the warse o' her watting; but she be tired, and will stawp in bed to-day. She be a pratty creature, Hugh, and rich, I darsay; for her fingers be covered wi' dawmond rings.'

All that day, overcome by the fatigue through which she had passed, Madeline remained in her chamber; while I, utterly unable to work, hung like a restless spirit about the house. The next morning she awoke refreshed; and when we three sat at breakfast, she astonished us all by appearing amongst us, fully dressed, and looking bright and well.

Her advent caused a general exclamation;

my aunt ran forward to her assistance; my uncle placed our most comfortable chair beside the fire; while I, dumb and powerless, stood in the background doing nothing. Madeline! Could this be Madeline?—the little girl I had dreamed of all these years, whose hands had been covered with my passionate kisses and marked with my tears, and who had even wept a little herself at parting with me; could this be the same?—this glorious creature, with dreamy black eyes, warm brown skin, and glorious black hair! Her form was tall and straight as a willow; she moved like a queen!

As all her own clothes had been lost in the wreck she wore a dress of my aunt's; over it she had thrown the cloak which she had worn on the wreck, and which was now thoroughly dried. She came forward languidly, leaning on the shoulder of her black attendant, and sank down into the chair which my uncle had placed

for her, while the native began crying and kissing her hands. They spoke together in the foreign tongue; then Madeline raised her eyes and looked quietly around. All this while I had been standing in the background, longing, yet dreading to speak to her; for I saw clearly enough that to her all the past was forgotten; but now, as her eyes swept the room and finally rested with a look of recognition on my face, I felt the hot blood mount to my temples.

'Am I mistaken?' she asked, softly; 'did you take me from the wreck?'

I bowed my head. In a moment all her languor disappeared, the old fire darted from her eyes, the old flush suffused her cheeks—she was the Madeline of my childhood once more. She looked at her hands, with one quick movement pulled off the most valuable of her rings, and held it towards me

'Will you not take it?' she said, with a bright smile. 'You saved my life.'

Her whole manner was that of a lady speaking to an inferior. Under my excitement I hardly noticed it. Scarcely knowing what I did, I sprang forward and took the ring; then, eagerly kissing her hand, I placed it again upon her finger.

'Madeline,' I said, 'don't you know me? Madeline—Miss Graham!'

She looked at me more critically, and shook her head.

'Have you forgotten Munster's?' I said, 'and Hugh Trelawney?'

If I expected a wild outburst of pleasure at the mention of my own name, I was quickly disappointed. She only smiled; and, with her eyes fixed upon vacancy as if she was reviewing the past, said:

'Munster's? Hugh Trelawney? Oh yes;

of course I remember *now*! Hugh Trelawney was the nicest of those Munster boys, and we were friends; but,' she added, fixing her eyes anxiously upon me, 'surely *you* are not that boy?'

'Yes,' I replied, 'I am Hugh Trelawney!

Her eyes opened wider, she glanced from me to my uncle and aunt, then round the kitchen, then she was silent.

I felt that some explanation was due to her, and I gave it. I told her of my father's death—of the kindness of my uncle and aunt, and of my subsequent life at St. Gurlott's.

'St. Gurlott's!' she said. 'Is this St. Gurlott's in Cornwall?'

I answered in the affirmative.

'Then I have an aunt living in a place of that name,' she continued. 'Perhaps you may know her: her name is Mrs. Redruth.'

'Lawd a mussey! wha, that be our master's mother!' broke in my aunt. But I added:

'Are you sure it's the same, Miss Graham? This Mrs. Redruth has a son who owns the mine.'

'Yes, I know—my cousin George!' she answered; while my heart misgave me at the familiar manner in which she mentioned the name. 'Oh, it must be the same,' she continued, enthusiastically; 'and to think I should be shipwrecked here, of all places in the world! Mr. Trelawney, are they far away? Would it be possible to let them know that I am here?'

'It will be quite possible. Shall I take a message?'

'Will you be so kind? Perhaps if you tell her the story and show her this,' she continued, drawing a quaint signet-ring from her finger, 'my aunt will come to me. This was my dear

father's ring, and she knew it well, for he always wore it,—and he had it on even when he died!'

I took the ring from her hand and started off on my mission.

The events of the last few hours had made me a changed being. I began to wonder if it was all real; whether I had really seen Madeline, and whether the one real romance of my life had been ruthlessly swept away. It was clear to me now that she thought little of the past, and cared for it even less. While I had been living upon the memory of those dear days, she had let other events obliterate it entirely from her mind. Well, it was clear I must do the same. I must deliver her up to the custody of her relations as coldly as if she were a stranger who had casually been cast in my path for a day.

Having made my decision, I became calmer,

and walked with a steady step up to Redruth House. I inquired for the young master; learned that he had left for London two days before. I asked for the mistress, and she saw me. She listened to my story quietly enough; when I showed her the ring, her white face flushed, her hand trembled, and her eyes filled with tears.

'It is my brother's, my poor brother's,' she said, more to herself than to me; then she added, 'My niece is at your cotage, you say?'

'Yes, madame.'

'Tell her, I will come to her at once.'

I left the house and, instead of returning to the cottage, walked straight down to the mine. Where was the use of my returning to Madeline: to stand by and see that grim and stony-hearted woman bring to her queenly eyes the light of happiness, to her lips the cry of joy,

which the sight of my face had failed to do? No; such a sight might have roused all that was bad in my nature. I was better away.

All day I worked with a fierce persistence which alarmed me. I looked at myself in my mining suit, then recalled Madeline as I had seen her that morning—with her soft hands sparkling with gems, and the black servant crouching at her feet—and realised more than ever the distance that divided us from one another.

She was the mistress, born to command; I the servant, whose business it was to obey.

I returned home in the evening, and found the cottage much the same as it had always been. Madeline was gone.

'She be up at Redruth House, Hugh,' said my aunt. 'The awld missus came and took her away, and right glad she was to go, poor lass!'

She showed me a five-pound note which Madeline had given her, borrowing it from her aunt to do so. She put the note into an old work-box where most of her treasures were kept, and set about getting the tea, imagining that the romance of last night's wreck had ended.

CHAPTER XV.

UNDER THE SPELL.

For some days after that I saw nothing whatever of Madeline; indeed, so close was she kept in the great house that she might never have existed at all. I began to think that she had taken her departure from Cornwall, but I was wrong. One day, the seventh from that on which the lifeboat had brought Madeline to shore, I made a minute inspection of the mine, which every day grew more dangerous, and came up from my work covered with filth from head to foot. I had passed the last ladder, and stood on *terra firma*, at the mouth of the mine, dazzled by the quick transformation from pitch

darkness to broad daylight, when my ears were struck by the sound of a voice which passed like sudden music through my frame. I rubbed my eyes and looked about me, and there, not far from where I stood, was my old sweetheart. She was dressed now in an elegant costume of grey, which fitted her to perfection ; a little hat with long plumes was on her head, and her face, looking lovelier than ever, glowed and sparkled in the light : with her rich brown skin and sparkling black eyes, her erect carriage, graceful tread, she looked like some Eastern princess! She was walking towards the spot where I stood ; George Redruth was beside her ; while behind followed the black girl, Anita, her dark eyes fixed upon her mistress. This sudden encounter had so unnerved me that, for a moment, it deprived me of the power both of speech and motion. Quickly recovering myself, however, I was about to move away, and so

avoid embarrassment, when the master's voice arrested me.

'Trelawney,' he said; 'one moment.' I paused.

'Yes, sir.'

'Miss Graham wishes to go down the mine. I tell her it is impossible. What do you say? Is it fit for a lady?'

I was about to reply when Madeline interposed.

'Don't worry about it, George,' she said, 'I've abandoned the idea.' Then, stepping up to me, she held forth her little gloved hand. I bowed over it, but did not take it, giving as an excuse that I was not fit to approach her.

'I dare say you were in quite as forlorn a condition the other morning when you snatched me from the wreck,' she said; 'yet you did not hesitate then, when your own life was in peril. Mr. Trelawney, take my hand.'

I did as she requested, I clasped the little hand in both of mine and raised it respectfully to my lips. In doing so, I caught a glimpse of George Redruth's face: it was black as the pit's mouth.

'Now, my dear Madeline,' he said, impatiently, 'shall we go back?'

But Madeline was not ready, or perhaps she was too imperious to be so ordered by her cousin. She had abandoned all intention of descending the mine; but she was, nevertheless, anxious to inspect the outside of it.

'But you can go,' she said. 'Mr. Trelawney will escort me.'

'Nonsense!' returned her cousin. 'Trelawney has got his work to attend to. I will stay.'

And he did stay, for fully two hours; at the end of which time she allowed him to take her away.

Three other days passed without a sign from her; then I encountered her again. It was in the evening, when I was walking home. This time she was alone; except for the servant, who walked at a respectful distance behind her. She came up to me unreservedly, and again held forth her hand. Having shaken hands with her, I paused, not very well knowing what to do; when she helped me.

'I came to walk back with you,' she said. 'Do you mind?'

'*I mind?*' I repeated, in amazement. 'You forget, Miss Graham, it is an honour for me to walk beside you.'

She gave a little impatient toss of her head, and we walked on together. For some time not a word was spoken, but I felt that she was watching me keenly. Presently she said:

'Do you know what I have been doing, Mr. Trelawney?'

'No.'

'I have been trying to find in you one trace of the boy I knew, years ago, at Munster's —and I have failed.'

'I don't understand.'

'No? Well, I will explain. The boy I knew was kind to me; frank, open-hearted, generous. You are somewhat unfriendly; reserved, harsh, and, if I may say so, churlish. Why are you so changed?'

'I am not changed, Miss Graham; or, if I am, it is but with the tide of fortune, which has ebbed and not flowed with me since we met before. When we were at Munster's I believed we were equals, but now——'

'Yes; now——'

'You are Miss Madeline Graham; I am the overseer of your cousin's mine.'

'Then you wish us to remain strangers?'

'I think it would be better.'

'Ah! you are crueller than I thought; if you will not accept my friendship for the sake of the old days when we were boy and girl together, you will, at least, have some pity upon me. I am lonely and amongst strangers here. You seem like an old friend. If you will suffer me to talk to you sometimes it will make my stay here more pleasant.'

Her pleading won the day, and we became friends. I never went to Redruth House, and she never came to the cottage. I never sought her, but quite innocently and frankly she sought me. We often went on the moor when, after my long day's work, I was making my way home, and I could not regard these meetings as purely accidental on her part. She was always accompanied by the black girl, until one evening, when she appeared alone.

'You are looking for Anita!' said Madeline, noting my glance. 'She has gone to London

with my aunt's maid, and will not return till close on midnight. My cousin counselled my staying at home to-night, or allowing him to accompany me. I knew I should not want for company, so refused to submit. I may not enjoy these walks much longer.'

'What! are you going away?' I asked, in some alarm.

She shrugged her shoulders. 'Perhaps! I don't know; certainly I shall have to go sooner or later, but I trust it may not be sooner. When I was shipwrecked here I was on my way to London, to take up my abode with some other relations. They are troubling me with questions, so I have sent up Anita to satisfy them as to my safety. Yet I suppose I shall some day have to go.'

She tried to speak carelessly, yet I fancied I detected a ring of regret in her voice, and I

quailed before the feeling of desolation which her words brought to my heart.

In that one sentence she had unwittingly shown to me myself—revealed to me the terrible secret which I had been vainly trying to crush from my heart. Even as she had influenced my boyhood, she influenced my manhood.

I loved her with the same unthinking love which had filled my soul as a boy—loved her even while I felt that such a love might be the means of blighting my life. I knew that no good could come of it, for was she not as far removed from me as the moon was removed from the sea; and yet I felt at that moment that to love her so, be it only for one hour, was worth whole centuries of pain.

She walked with me as far as the cottage, and, pausing at the little wicket gate, gave me her hand.

'Good night, Mr. Trelawney,' she said, softly; 'it is not good-bye yet!'

Again I raised her hand, and pressed it to my lips; then I dimly remember entering the cottage; but all seemed unreal—save the one overmastering fact that, fool that I was, I was the slave of Madeline Graham!

CHAPTER XVI.

BY THE SEA.

THE next day was Sunday. I rose early and put on my idling clothes, a dark suit of tweed. That I took more than usual pains with myself may be assumed from the fact that my aunt, as I strolled in to breakfast, started, and looked at me from head to foot in no little surprise. Then she sighed deeply, and glanced at my uncle, who, also dressed for the day, in a suit of solemn black, was sitting moodily by the fire.

For many days past there had been noticeable a curious change in my uncle's manner. I scarcely observed it at the time, for my heart was too full of other and pleasanter impres-

sions ; but afterwards, when I came to think it over, I remembered vividly what had previously passed without remark. To begin with, he looked at least ten years older. His old cheery laugh was gone ; and his eyes had a hard, far-away look, very different to their former happy brightness. Sometimes, as we sat together, he would rise abruptly and pass out of the house, leaving the meal on the table untouched. My aunt seemed to forget her own trouble in watching his ; and nothing could surpass the silent tenderness with which she waited upon him, never breathing a word of her solicitude, but showing in a hundred gentle ways her wifely sympathy and devotion.

On the present occasion we breakfasted very late ; and as we sat, there came to us, faintly wafted over the distant moorland, the sound of the church bells. My uncle started, listened, and drew back his chair. Then, before we could

say a word, he seized his hat, and left the house.

'Gaw after him, Hugh!' cried my aunt—adding quickly, 'Na, stay! Maybe 'tis better to let 'un be. Oh, Hugh, Hugh, he's never been the same man since our Annie went fra hame!'

And the tears streamed down her worn cheeks as she spoke, and her voice was broken.

'Don't fret, aunt,' I said, gently. 'I'm sure Annie is all right—indeed, you know from her own letter that no harm has come to her.'

'I'm nawt fretting for Annie, it's for father!' was the reply. 'I dawn't knaw what there be upon his mind, but he's tarrible changed; and what be warst, he won't speak o't even to *me*; but keeps it like a canker-warm, a-gnawing and eating out his life. I

were watching him just naw, and I knaw'd well what were passing through un's mind.'

'What?'

'First he saw thee dressed and smart, and he thought haw his Annie, too, would be sitting, ready for church o' Sundays; and then the bells sounded, and all the happy time cam' back upon poor father's heart. Oh, Hugh! if you and Annie had been different to one another, father would ha' been happy still; but I dawn't blame 'ee, lad—it were no fault o' yourn!'

But though she acquitted me in words, there was in a manner a certain affectionate reproach.

'Aunt,' I said, 'I would cut off my hand to put things right; but Annie never cared for me, and I——'

I paused awkwardly, knowing well that I had never loved my cousin.

'The Lawd will punish her!' cried my

aunt, bitterly. 'I'll ne'er forgie her! If she had stayed at hame like a decent lass, it would all ha' come right i' the end. But she went wi' scarce a ward, and wherever she be, the Lawd will punish her!'

'Nay, nay,' I said, rising and putting my hand on my aunt's shoulder, 'don't be hard on poor Annie! She'll soon come back, and then all will be explained.'

My aunt's manner changed again, and the tears streamed from her eyes anew.

'Oh, Hugh, my lad, think you our lassie will *ever* coom back?'

'Of course. 'Twas but a lass's whim for change; she'll soon tire and return. I'm sure no harm has happened to her, and she was always kind and loving.'

'Saw she were, Hugh, saw she were! Hugh, will 'ee speak to father, and try to cheer 'un?'

I nodded, then stooping, I kissed my aunt

on the cheek. The Sabbath bells still rang from the distance, clearly and sweetly. The sun looked in through the window, and a sunbeam trembled on the paven floor.

'Shall you gaw to church, lad?' asked my aunt, as I moved to the door.

'Not to-day,' I replied. 'I'm going for a walk on the moor.'

She looked at me keenly, and I saw that she guessed my secret; for the truth was, I was hoping and praying to meet with Madeline. With a heavy sigh, she turned away, and began removing the breakfast things.

Once outside, I breathed again. It was a calm, beautiful, sunny day, with just a touch of frost in the clear sparkling air. Far away the sea shone like silver.

I hesitated a moment, then walked down the road towards the lodge gate—towards the very spot, where, years before, I had first met

George Redruth. No one was about; a Sabbath stillness lay everywhere; and the faint sound of the far-off bells only rendered it deeper.

I paused at the gate, and looked up the avenue. There was no sign of anyone. I longed to walk right up to the great house and inquire for her I sought; but I lacked the courage. What was I, a common overseer of the mine, to go following the footsteps of a proud lady? If I could meet her by accident, good and well: but I did not wish even her to suspect that I was so anxious for the meeting.

Perhaps she had gone on to church. If so, doubtless George Redruth was in her company. I fretted at the thought, and turned away. At last, weary with waiting, I determined to seek forgetfulness in a long walk across the moor, such as I had told my aunt I had intended to take.

Quitting the road, I followed a path which led right over the open moorland in the direction of the sea. The air was full of lightness and sweetness ; but my spirits by this time had sunk to freezing-point. As to forgetting the one object of my thought, that was simply impossible. My soul was full of one image, which went with me at every step I took.

I had wandered about a mile when I perceived, by the side of a lonely moorland tarn —one of those dark, turf-stained pools which cast back the light like polished ebony, and are often mysteriously deep—the figure of a man. He was sitting on a fragment of rock, and looking at the water.

Coming up quickly, I recognised my uncle.

Our eyes met, but he did not speak. Turning his head away, he looked down at the tarn.

'Why, uncle,' I cried, 'I thought you were at church!'

'Naw, lad,' he answered, still with his head averted: 'naw, lad, I were in naw mood for to kneel and pray. I came out yar on the waste land, and I sat down yar, a-thinking.'

I put my hand upon his shoulder.

'Uncle, you're not angry? With *me*, I mean?'

'Naw, lad,' he replied, in the same low, listless tones. 'I ha' no call to be angry, least of all wi' thee. Don't 'ee mind *me*—gang your gait, and lea' me here alawn.'

But I remembered my promise to my aunt, and was determined not to leave him so. So I sat down by his side, saying:

'You've no reason to take it so much to heart; it's *making* trouble, I think, before it comes. I know well why you're fretting yourself so much. It's about Annie; but, take

my word for it, Annie's all right, and will soon come back home.'

He turned his face towards mine. How strangely wild and weary it seemed, set in its iron-grey hair.

'Sometimes I think, lad, as she'll *never* coom back; and if she do, will she e'er again be the same little Annie I used to knaw? But it's nawt *that*, my lad, it's nawt *that* as is on my mind.'

'Then what is it? Annie, I am sure, is well and happy: so what can it be?'

He looked at me long and steadfastly before he replied.

'If my lass went away, it mun ha' been because o' trouble; and if 'twere trouble, 'twere a kind that she were feared to tell even to her awn father. That letter my Annie writ came from a sore heart—maybe a heart some villain had broken; and what I think, lad, other folk

think too—I ha' seen them whispering it to one anawther, and looking at *me*!'

Of course I understood him well enough; for the same thought had often enough been in my own mind.

'Whatever has happened,' I said, 'be sure of one thing,—Annie is not to blame! Uncle, do you know what I have often suspected? My cousin left us only for a little while, because she wished to be out of George Redruth's way.'

'What d'ye mean?' he cried, starting, and trembling violently.

'There was something between them. He had won her heart, perhaps. Then, distrusting him, and knowing the great distance between their stations, she said to herself, "I will go away for a time till I am cured, or till *he* has left the place."'

My uncle frowned thoughtfully, and shook his head.

'Naw, Hugh—there be more in't than that; but, whate'er it be, I'm sure the young master had no hand in't. I know you never liked 'un, Hugh; but Master Jargè has a kind heart, and would never do a dirty deed. Why, I ha' knawed him and sarved him ever sin' he were a boy, and I'd trust 'un wi' my own life.'

In pity for his trouble, I forbore to tell him all I knew. Even had I done so, I believe his simple faith in the 'master' would have remained firm.

'It's of summat else I'm thinking, lad,' he said, after a pause; 'summat that were tawld me t'other day by John Rudd. Three or four days arter Annie went away, John Rudd he saw her in Falmouth, alawng wi' that Yankee chap, Johnson, the overseer.'

He noticed my start of surprise, and continued:

'They were standing talking together on the

quay, and Annie were crying. Maybe there's summat in it, and maybe nawt; but sin' the night she went, overseer chap has been away—folk say, in London. Putting this and that together, Hugh, my lad, what do it all mean?'

I was as puzzled as himself; but I hastened to assure him of one thing—the utter impossibility of there being any intimate relationship between my cousin and the pseudo-American. He looked somewhat incredulous, for in his simple eyes Johnson was a stylish and important person, very likely to find favour in the eyes of a young woman.

He rose wearily, and held out his hand.

'Lea' me to think it out, lad. My mind be fixed that summat's wrang, and I shan't sleep till I knaw the truth, the whole Gospel truth. I ha' been praying and praying that things be nawt as I ha' feared, for if any living man had played the villain wi' my Annie, Lawd help

him! Lawd keep him from the reach o' my hands!'

As I looked into his face, I could not help echoing the prayer. I felt certain, at the same time, that his fears and suspicions had shot greatly in excess of the truth. I knew that scandal was busy with poor Annie's name, and that much of the scandal must have reached his ears; but I could not yet bring myself to believe that Annie's flight betokened anything seriously wrong. Of one thing I felt, nevertheless, certain—that if wrong *had* been done, George Redruth was in some way responsible.

I stood and watched my uncle, as he wandered away in the direction of our home; then I turned my face again towards the sea, and wandered on. As I went, the moor grew opener and wilder, strewn with great stones and boulders like fragments of the wreck of

some past world; some huge as menhirs translated thither in some prehistoric period of wondrous floods — when the arid waste on which I trod was the oozy bottom of a troubled sea.

Here and there fed wild cattle, black and horned, like those that haunted the woods of Ancient Britain. In solitary places the buzzard hovered, and by the brink of lonely tarns the heron waded, rising up as I approached, with sleepy waft of wing.

At last, after a ramble of several miles, I approached the sea margin. My path was now on the stony edge of low-lying cliffs, at the base of which the waters thundered for ever. Here I found a lonely promontory of black granite, stretching out into the sea, and whitened at its limits by the chalky droppings of innumerable sea-birds. On a rocky island a few yards from the extreme point of the pro-

montory, sat a flock of cormorants; as I approached, they turned their snake-like necks, but did not rise.

The sun was warm and bright, the sea calm and shimmering like steel. I threw myself down on the rocks, and, with face upturned to the clear skies, closed my eyes. A large black-winged gull wheeled screaming, over me, and then sailed slowly away. All I heard was the low murmur of the billows breaking sadly on the rocks beneath me — that sound which 'deepens silence,' and has such solemn meanings for the troubled human soul.

Suddenly another sound broke upon my ear. I started, and listened. The sound seemed to come from the sea itself, and was like a mermaid singing. I rose quickly, and, crossing the rocks, walked in the direction from which the voice came.

Approaching the edge of the crags, I

looked down, and saw beneath me, in the very shadow of the promontory, a quiet creek. The rocks fell asunder, leaving a space of sandy beach, some twenty yards broad, and closed by the still waters of the sea, which broke in a thin fringe of white foam on a sunny slope of white pebble and golden sand.

It was a nook just such as the fabled mer-women or sirens might have chosen when the world was haunted, and such fair creations brightened the sunshine. But what am I saying? It was haunted still, and by one far sweeter and more winsome than any mere creation of a poet's fancy!

Lying like a basking seal on the loose shingle just under the rocks, and looking up at me with sparkling eyes, was the coloured girl from Demerara; and standing on the water's edge, with her face looking seaward, was Madeline Graham.

CHAPTER XVII.

A WALK ACROSS THE MOOR.

Full of delight at the unexpected vision, I ran down the rocks, and soon leapt down upon the beach, close to the spot where Anita was lying. She uttered a merry cry in Spanish, which caused her mistress to look in my direction. Madeline exhibited no surprise, but after a momentary glance, continued her occupation, that of writing or drawing something on the sand with the point of her parasol.

I walked towards her, and greeted her by name. She smiled and nodded, but still continued intent upon the sand beneath her. I

followed the direction of her eyes, and to my astonishment read my own name, thus:

HUGH TRELAWNEY, ST. GURLOTT'S.

The hot blood rushed to my cheek; but fled again almost immediately, as I read close by the words:

GEORGE REDRUTH, ESQ.

Both the master's name and my own were printed large and bold. Close by them, smaller in size and in running writing, were the incomplete letters on which she was then busy—

MADELINE GR——

But no sooner had she reached the 'r' than she glanced up at me, laughed merrily, and obliterated it all with her little daintily booted foot.

'What brought you here, Mr. Trelawney?'

she said. 'I thought that you would have been at church.'

'I thought the same of you,' I replied, smiling.

'Then you did not follow us?'

'Certainly not; though had I known, I might very possibly have done so. But who could have dreamed of finding you in this solitary place, so far away from home?'

'My true home is far away indeed,' she answered; and raising her hand, she pointed right out to sea. 'Yonder! Sometimes I wish that, as the Scripture says, I had wings like a bird that I might fly back!'

And I saw that her beautiful eyes were dim with tears.

'Have you relations there?' I asked. 'Or friends whom you love?'

'Neither friends nor relations. When my dear father died I was left quite solitary. But

I lived so long there, and was so happy! And South America is so beautiful, so different from this dreary land!'

I watched her nervously.

'Some day, perhaps, you will return?'

'Perhaps—I cannot tell,' she replied, sadly, and turning on her heel, she walked slowly towards the spot where Anita was lying. The girl looked up and showed her white teeth, smiling; the smile broadened as her mistress spoke to her rapidly in Portuguese.

'Anita is of my opinion,' said Madeline; 'she thinks this English climate detestable, and she longs for the palms and temples of the West. I suppose I shall have to send her back. The people think her a wild savage, because she does not understand their barbarous dialect, and she will never settle in England.'

I had my own suspicion that Madeline was laughing at me, and that Anita's smile had

a quite different meaning; but I was too happy in the mere presence of my darling to trouble myself on that head. Merely to stand by her side, and look into her face, and hear her musical voice, was joy sufficient; for never had she seemed more bright and beautiful. She wore a rich sealskin cloak, tightly fitting, and descending to her knees; a pretty sealskin hat to match; and the parasol she carried was more for use as a walking-stick than for a safeguard against the sun. The sea breeze had brought the colour to her delicate cheek, and her dark eyes were unusually light and happy.

For the time being I forgot the social gulf between us, between her wealth and my poverty, and talked freely and unrestrainedly of many things. The old constraint left me, I suppose to the improvement of my manners, for Madeline seemed to look at me and listen to me with unusual interest.

'And *you*?' she said, presently. 'Shall you remain in this lonely Cornwall all your life?'

The question took me by surprise, and was difficult to answer.

'Who can tell?' I said. 'I have often thought of trying my fortune across the ocean, but habit has kept me chained to a dull place and a cheerless occupation. Sometimes, do you know, Miss Graham, I think it is all fatality. It seems so strange, for example, that I should have been brought here at all, and that, even in so unlikely a place, we two should have been once more thrown together.'

'It is fortunate for *me*, at any rate, that you became a Cornishman.'

'How so?'

'Because, otherwise, I might not have survived—to thank you for my life!'

Was it gratitude, or an even tenderer senti-

ment, that filled her eyes with such tender meaning, and after one long look, made her blush and turn her head away? I cannot tell; but the look made my heart leap, while a new thrill of rapturous hope trembled through my veins. I glanced at Anita; she was basking again, with closed eyes. Carried beyond myself by the inspiration of the moment, I took my darling's hand.

'Miss Graham,' I said; 'Madeline—may I call you again by that dear name?—ever since we parted, years ago, you have been the one memory of my life; and when we met again——'

I would have continued impetuously; but gently disengaging her hand, she cried,

'Anita! come, it is time to go home.'

The girl seemed to understand, for she sprang to her feet and pointed eagerly up the rocks. For myself, I stood stupefied and

ashamed; but turning again to me with a light smile, Madeline continued:

'Are you returning to the village, Mr. Trelawney? If so, let us walk together.'

Something in her manner convinced me that I had better encroach no further, but make the best of my immediate chance of happiness. So I answered eagerly that I was at her service, and the next minute I was piloting her up the rocks. The way was troublesome, and she often needed and accepted the help of my hand, thrilling me through and through with her warm touch.

At last we left the rock-sown promontory behind us, and stepped out on the open heath. We two led the way, while Anita followed behind, so slowly that we were soon left practically alone.

'How came you to walk so far?' I inquired.

'We are three or four miles, as the crow flies, from St. Gurlott's.'

'Oh, I came out early, and the sunshine tempted me on. I did not think that we had wandered such a distance. Poor Anita will be tired out.'

'And you?

'Oh, *I* love a long walk!' she replied, gaily. 'Even in Demerara I used to wander for hours and hours in the woods; and once I was nearly lost. Night came down suddenly, and I had to creep into the bole of a great tree; and I wasn't frightened, though I could hear the tiger-cats crying all round me; for the fire-flies made it almost as light as day. But poor papa nearly went out of his mind, and, after that would never let me enter the woods alone.

'How did they find you?'

'By beating the woods. There were about

a hundred coolies carrying torches, and making noise enough to wake the dead. At last, as they were passing, I popped out of my hiding-place, and cried, quite coolly, "Here I am, papa!" He was terribly angry, but I was soon forgiven.'

'It would be a hard heart,' I murmured, tenderly, 'that would not forgive *you* anything!'

She looked at me merrily, and shook her head.

'Ah, you don't know me! Poor papa, if he were alive, could tell you a different tale. I was always a spoiled child, Mr. Trelawney.'

Thus lightly talking, and playing with the merest threads of conversation, to avoid touching themes of more dangerous interest, we walked across the moor. Though it was winter-tide, the air was very close and warm with sunlight, and Anita lagged more and more

behind. At last we came in sight of the village, and paused by the side of the moorland tarn where I had parted with my uncle. My eyes were fixed earnestly on Madeline. Suddenly I saw her start and change colour.

Following the glance of her eyes, I caught sight of a well-known figure approaching. It was George Redruth, elegantly dressed, and carrying a walking-cane.

He came up rapidly, and I saw by the expression of his face that he was ill-pleased. He glanced at me angrily and contemptuously, and then addressed his cousin.

'Where have you been?' he cried. 'I have been looking for you everywhere. Do you know that it is three o'clock?'

'I did not know it was so late,' replied Madeline, quietly. 'Anita and I went wandering across the moor and down to the seaside, where we found Mr. Trelawney.'

He looked at me again, and I saw his brow blacken more and more.

'Lunch was served at half-past one,' he muttered, 'and my mother has driven over to afternoon service. I won't trouble Trelawney any further. Take my arm, and let me see you home.'

He spoke with the air of authority habitual with him. I was not surprised to see Madeline flush angrily, and decline the proffered arm.

'There is plenty of time for that,' she exclaimed. 'See! poor Anita is almost exhausted—it would be a charity to assist her; it is none to assist *me*!'

Indeed, Anita seemed dead beat. She was seated on a stone, about a hundred yards behind us, resting her elbows on her knees, her chin in her hands. Redruth glanced towards her and shrugged his shoulders.

'I never go near niggers,' he retorted;

'can't stand them. Perhaps Trelawney is not so particular,' he added, with an insufferable sneer.

Our eyes met, and a sharp retort was on my tongue, when Madeline broke in, with a touch of his own cutting manner:

'Anita is not what you so politely call her; and as for Mr. Trelawney, he is at least a gentleman, incapable of making coarse remarks, even at the expense of a social inferior.'

This eulogium of myself seemed to afford George Redruth intense amusement. Possibly he thought the word 'gentleman' had an odd sound applied to a person of my position. I flushed to the temples, but did not trust myself to make any observation. Without even looking at Redruth, I raised my hat to Madeline, and walked rapidly away.

CHAPTER XVIII.

I RECEIVE MY CONGÉ.

Absorbed as I was in my newly-awakened love for Madeline, I failed to notice for some time the changes which were going on about us; but I was soon brought from dreamland by the attitude which the young master chose to take.

It soon became clear to me that his resentment, from whatever source it sprang, was levelled against me; and in a short time I discovered that the innocent cause of all these eruptions was Madeline herself.

George Redruth had made up his mind to woo Madeline Graham, and he honoured me

so far as to fear that my presence in St. Gurlott's might be the means of preventing him winning his cousin's hand. A marriage with Madeline would be advantageous to him, principally because his own position was becoming very insecure, he having gambled and bet away most of his fortune, and so being in danger of losing the position which her money would restore to him. Thus it was that he watched the growing friendship between myself and his cousin with ever-increasing anger; and finding he could not openly control her, he determined, I afterwards learned, to gain his ends by treachery.

It was not to these things, however, which I was able at this time to give my entire thoughts; other and more painful matters occurred which for a time drove the young master from my mind.

At home things were going very badly

with us. My uncle remained in the same desponding state, while every day fresh wrinkles appeared in my aunt's face—the tears were often wet upon her cheek. It seemed a sin for me to be happy while so much grief remained at home; and I sometimes felt inclined to go right away and not return till I could bring our lost one along with me.

I began to wonder, too, if my uncle could be right when he said that the new overseer had a hand in poor Annie's downfall. It was strange, but since the night of Annie's disappearance Johnson's face had not been seen in St. Gurlott's. I was pondering over a solution of all these mysteries when one day an event happened which threatened to bring matters to a climax indeed.

I had come up from the mine after a prolonged inspection of it, and stood at the entrance, blinded with tallow and droppings,

when suddenly I heard a wild sound of voices, and turning round I saw two men facing each other, and looking as if they were about to close in a deadly grip. One of the men was my uncle, the other was Johnson, the overseer.

At sight of the man whom he believed to be his bitterest foe, all my uncle's feebleness seemed to fall miraculously from him. He towered above the other, and raised his clenched fist as if to strike.

'You villain!' he cried. 'You cowardly, treacherous villain! Tell me, whar is my lass? Tell me, or, by the Lawd, I strike 'ee dead before me!'

In another moment the arm would have descended, for Johnson was paralysed with fear; but I sprang forward and caught it with a cry. My uncle tried to wrench himself free.

'Let gaw, Hugh!' he cried, fiercely. 'I told 'ee what I'd do if I met the villain, and

I'll do't. Look at 'un, the white-faced cur; he brought trouble to my lass! And naw, while she's wanderin' about the earth in misery maybe, he cooms yar to laugh at what he's dawn!'

I still held him firmly; and Johnson, cur that he was, seeing that the danger was passed, recovered his presence of mind.

'Perhaps, now you're a little calmer,' he said, 'you'll tell me what you're raving about?'

'I will answer for him,' I replied. 'Where is Annie Pendragon?'

He shrugged his shoulders, and raised his brows.

'It seems to me you are all raving lunatics together. Why do you ask me these things? What do I know of the girl?'

'You are supposed to have enticed her from her home. You were seen with her in Falmouth, and you must know where she is.'

'I don't know where she is. I met her in Falmouth, it's true, and spoke to her; but her being away from home was no concern o' mine.'

'It's a lie!' cried my uncle, fiercely; and again he tried to free himself from my grasp, but I held him firmly.

'It's no use,' I said; 'we shan't mend matters with him. We must find out by some other means whether or not he is speaking the truth.'

The result of all this was a serious illness, which laid my uncle low, and for some weeks threatened his life. During this time Madeline came frequently to the cottage, accompanied by Anita, who carried little tempting things for the poor old man to eat. At last the terrible time passed, and he rose from his bed—the feeble worn-out wreck of his old self.

From that day forth his intellect seemed

shaken, but he clung with strange persistence to the one idea, that Johnson was in some way responsible for all that had taken place. I had my own reasons for refusing to share this belief; nevertheless, I saw the overseer again, and after the interview with him, I became more firmly convinced than ever that my uncle was wrong in his surmises. If Johnson had a hand in Annie's flight, he was not the real wrong-doer. I still suspected George Redruth, though as yet I had been unable to obtain absolute proof of his guilt.

Meantime, having seen my uncle on the high road to recovery, I was compelled once more to turn my attention to the mine, which grew every day more dangerous. I had spoken to the master of these dangers again and again, and he had taken no heed. So long as he was safe above ground it was nothing to him that the lives of the men who worked below were

in daily jeopardy. Nevertheless, I knew that something must be done; I resolved to make one last appeal to him, and if that failed in its effect to communicate with the members of the company, who, conjointly with himself, owned the property. I had fully made up my mind to see him at home, when I was spared the pains. He strolled down to the counting-house one morning in company with Johnson.

'Mr. Redruth,' I said, approaching him, 'I should like to speak a few words to you, sir.'

He looked at me from head to foot with a cold supercilious sneer which sent my blood up to boiling heat, as he replied:

'Well, you can speak then—I am all attention.'

I glanced at Johnson, but as that worthy made no attempt to go I proceeded.

'It's about the mine,' I began, when he interrupted me.

'Oh, the mine!' he said, impatiently; 'I think I have heard a good deal on this subject from you before?'

'You have, sir; and you have taken no heed; but the time has passed for all that—each day the danger grows, and now at any moment the sea may break in and every soul be killed!'

While I had been speaking he had been engaged in lighting a cigar; when I had finished he removed the cigar from his mouth, puffed out a volume of smoke, which he watched ascend, and asked quietly:

'Do the men know of the danger which you say is threatening them?'

'Most assuredly they do!'

'And do they refuse to work?'

'No; where would be the use? If they left the mine they would be thrown out of employment, and then their families would

starve. Better for them to hold their own lives in their hands than to expose their wives and children to such a fate!'

'Very good; then since by your own showing you are the only discontented spirit, it's time for you to go!'

The cool way in which he uttered these words fairly took away my breath.

'What do you mean?' I asked.

'Just what I say,' he returned: 'that from to-day you may consider yourself dismissed from the mine, and had better seek elsewhere for employment. If you are dissatisfied, other people are not. Mr. Johnson is quite contented with the state of affairs, and is willing to take your place.'

Seeing that resistance would be useless, I accepted my *congé* with as good a grace as possible, but I was determined not to resign without freely speaking my mind, so I faced

George Redruth firmly and said, placing my hand upon his arm just as he was turning away:

'I have been expecting this for a long time, and it has come. Well, so much the better. I warn you, however, that I shall do my duty, and let the company know the exact state of affairs.'

He turned to Johnson, and I saw the two exchange a significant smile; then his face hardened as he replied, contemptuously:

'You will, of course, do as you please; only oblige me by getting out of my employment as quickly as possible.'

'It will be a good riddance!' muttered Johnson, breaking in for the first time. 'Trelawney has always been a croaker.'

The fellow's insolent leer provoked me far more than his master's *sang-froid*.

'I'll croak to some tune,' I cried, facing him, 'if *you* presume to talk to *me*!'

'Presume, indeed!' he repeated, turning white with fear or malice. ''Taint much presumption, I guess, to take down a young cock-o'-the-walk who puts on airs as if he was a gentleman. If Mr. George had listened to my advice, he'd have got rid of you long ago!'

'Come along, Johnson,' said Redruth; 'he's not worth talking to.'

But I clenched my fists and blocked the way. I suppose there was something in my face which looked ugly, for the two men recoiled before me. Several of the miners, attracted by our high words, had now gathered, and were looking on in astonishment.

'I know well an honest man is not wanted here,' I said. 'I've known that for many a long day. Like master, like man. You, sir, want a scoundrel to do your dirty work; and here he is, ready made, to your hand—as mean and cowardly a scoundrel as ever drew breath.'

'Out of the way, you ruffian!' cried Redruth, lifting his cane.

But he knew better than to strike me; he knew that, if he had done so, I would have thrashed him within an inch of his life; and he knew too that not one man there would have raised a finger to protect him, though he was the master of the mine.

But the presence of the onlookers, I suppose, made his companion foolhardy; for stepping forward, livid with passion, he shook his fist in my face.

'Who are you calling a scoundrel?' he cried. 'Do you know who I am? I'm overseer of this here mine, and you, you're a beggar, that's what you are! Why, darn you! I could eat you up and spit you out, and twenty more like you!'

He had proceeded thus far, garnishing his address with innumerable expletives, which

will not bear transcription, when, without more parley, unable to resist the provocation of his close proximity, I quietly knocked him down.

As he fell, George Redruth sprang towards me, and struck at me with his cane; but I tore the cane from his hand, broke it into pieces, and flung it away.

'Take care, sir!' I said, 'I may hurt you too, if you go too far.'

He drew back trembling.

'You shall smart for this, Trelawney! Before the day is out you shall lie in jail!'

'You know where to find me,' I answered; and then, without another word, I walked away.

It was not for hours afterwards that I realised what I had done; and even then I am afraid I did not regret my hasty conduct. Young and rash, I did not fear to face the world, though the mine was my bread, and I

had no other means of maintenance. As for Redruth's threat of invoking the law against me, nothing came of it. Doubtless, as his own sacred person had not suffered, he thought it best to hold his tongue.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE NEW OVERSEER.

The news of my dismissal from the mine was received by my aunt with infinite wailing. The poor soul, knowing that for some time past I had been the mainstay of the house, saw nothing before her but misery and starvation; indeed, she was for going straight to Redruth House and appealing to the master, but I checked her.

'Don't grieve, aunt,' I said. 'It will all be right, by-and-by. Say I am dismissed from the mine—what then? The mine isn't all the world. I shall get something, never fear.'

But my aunt shook her head.

'It be like young folk to make light o' things. When you'm a bit awlder, Hugh, you'll see things as I do—trouble ahead. 'Tis vary easy to talk, but what is there in the village but the mine?'

'But I'm going up to London, aunt.'

'To Lunnon! Lawd save the lad!—and what for should 'un gaw to Lunnon?'

'I am going up to see the company, and tell them what's going on at the mine. Keep your mind easy till I come back, aunt. 'Twill, maybe, all be right then.'

But my aunt continued to cry quietly, and grieved as bitterly as if she knew of the dark clouds which were gathering above.

As for my uncle, he sat and listened, and made no remark whatever. I concluded he did not understand, so I made no attempt to trouble him at all.

There was no time to be lost, and as soon,

therefore, as I had finished my task of comforting my aunt, I began to turn over in my mind what it would be best for me to do. I was as fully conscious of the gravity of the situation as my aunt herself, though I had thought fit to make light of it in order to lessen her pain. To be turned from the mine meant facing starvation—unless I could find a similar situation to the one I had lost; the only way to facilitate this being to see the company, who might consent to place me over some other mine. Besides, it was necessary that I should see them and plead the cause of the wretched creatures who daily faced death at George Redruth's command.

Having fully made up my mind that the journey must be taken, I resolved to start on the following morning, and began making my preparations accordingly.

During the years that I had been overseer

of the mine my salary had not been large, but I had been able to put by a small sum weekly. My first care was to break into this, to put into my pocket-book sufficient for my journey, and give a sum to my aunt.

'Don't be afraid to use it,' I said; 'there is more yet; and before it's all gone I'll have work, please God!'

My hopefulness, somehow, soon infected my aunt, and she set about putting my things together with a brighter face. She dried her tears, and talked quite cheerfully of my going.

'They do say,' she said, 'that averything's for the best, and maybe 'tis saw naw, though us can't just see it. Mayhap you'll meet our Annie in London and bring her back to us, Hugh.'

'It's more than likely,' I returned. 'Our black cloud won't last for ever, the silver lining must be coming round.'

When all was ready, I stepped down to the village to tell John Rudd to call for me on the morrow, when he was to start before day-break. Having done my errand, I lit my pipe and strolled slowly back to the cottage.

It was a splendid night. All the earth, hardened by the keen touch of frost, was flooded by the brilliant moon-rays ; and the sky was thick with stars. All was so quiet and peaceful, I could hear the click-clack of my footsteps on the frosty road.

My mind was sorely troubled ; I walked up and down the road until my pipe was finished, then I knocked out the burnt ashes upon the ground and turned to re-enter the cottage, when I started back with a half-suppressed cry. There, not very far from me, standing in the shadow of one of the laurel-bushes in Annie's garden, was the tall figure of a woman. She

came quickly towards me, and laid her hand upon my arm.

'Madeline!' I murmured, for it was indeed she, dressed in her evening dress, with her mantle thrown lightly over her head and shoulders, and her dear face raised wistfully to mine.

'Mr. Trelawney,' she said, quietly, 'is it true that you have been dismissed from the mine?'

'Yes; it is quite true, Miss Graham.'

'Oh, why will you not be as you were just now, and call me Madeline,' she cried, passionately. 'Why have all those years come and gone since we were children, and left us so far apart, Mr. Trelawney? Hugh, let us be children again! I was your help and solace once, let me be so to-night!'

She had spoken truly—why should a few years separate us? Once before she had

offered me her friendship and I had accepted it: why not accept it now? I took her hand and kissed it.

'You shall be the same to me now as you were then!' I answered, 'you shall be my friend!'

I think she understood me. She made no reply, but for a moment she turned her head aside; when she looked at me again, she was as calm as the moon-rays which lay all about her.

'Tell me what has happened,' she said, 'and what you are going to do.'

'Very little has happened,' I replied. 'I have got the dismissal which I have all along expected, and I am going away.'

'Mr. Trelawney, it was more than sympathy which brought me here to-night. I want to ask you a question.'

'Yes?'

'If my cousin offers you the post again, will you take it?'

I saw in a moment what she meant: that she would intercede for me; that the fact of my being reinstated would give that villain George Redruth a stronger hold over her; so I answered, firmly:

'No; the situation will not be offered to me, and if it was, I should refuse it.'

'Your uncle and aunt are dependent upon you, are they not?'

'Not entirely. My uncle is sufficiently recovered now to resume his work. For the last week he has been employed at the mouth of the mine. If my sins are not visited upon his head, and he is allowed to remain, they will do very well. As for myself, I am young and strong; there is no fear for me.'

She made no answer; and I, looking at

her, noticed, for the first time, how thinly she was clad.

'Madeline,' I said, 'you will get your death; let me take you back.'

I drew the shawl closer about her shoulders, put her hand upon my arm, and led her away.

'Hugh,' she said, presently, 'you have not told me the cause of all this trouble. Why have you and my cousin disagreed so terribly?'

The very fact that he was her cousin sealed my lips.

'There is nothing,' I said, 'but what had best be kept between man and man.'

'Then you absolutely refuse to make any concession?'

'I refuse to receive any favour from George Redruth.'

'Or from *me*?'

'From you, Madeline?'

'Yes. I am rich, you know—very rich,

and now that you are in trouble I might help you.'

'No,' I answered, quickly; 'don't think of it. It is impossible.'

'Impossible?' she replied; 'the word friendship to you means nothing.'

'It means that you may give me your sympathy. I am grateful for that, but I cannot accept money from you.'

I walked with her as far as the entrance to the grounds surrounding Redruth House, then I left her.

Her eyes were full of tears, as she said good-bye, and her little hand clung to mine with a persistence which well-nigh unmanned me. I was too much beside myself to return to the cottage, so for about half a mile I followed the road which led to the mine. It was late, there was not a living soul abroad it seemed to me; yet, as I turned to retrace my

steps, I came face to face with a man who had evidently been following close upon my heels. It was Johnson.

Madeline's softening influence was still upon me. Yet at sight of this evil face it seemed to fade, and there arose within me all that was worst in my soul. He paused, blocking my way, and sneeringly addressed me :

'I guess, young man,' he said, 'you'll get into worse trouble before you're done. Jest you let the governor see you as I saw you with Miss Graham to-night!'

The mention of her name by his foul lips roused me to frenzy.

'You scoundrel!' I cried, 'mention that lady's name again and by Heaven I'll strike you dead where you stand!'

'Oh,' he sneered, 'killing's your game, is it? Repeat that to-morrow before witnesses, young man, and your doom's sealed.'

He passed me by, and walked on towards the mine, while I, glad at heart to be safely away from him, walked with some speed towards home.

I found my aunt alone; I asked for my uncle.

'He be gone back to the mine, Hugh,' she returned. 'But dawn't 'ee sit up for 'un, lad. I daresay Jim Rivers 'll bring 'un hame.'

As I knew I should have to be ready to join John Rudd at five o'clock in the morning, I took my aunt's advice and went to bed; and so soundly did I sleep, that I heard nothing whatever of my uncle's return.

When I awoke it was still pitch dark. I struck a light, and found that it was four o'clock. I therefore got up and began to prepare for my journey.

I went about my work as quietly as possible, hoping to disturb no one; but shortly

after I entered the kitchen, my uncle appeared fully dressed for the day. He looked so white and strange that, for a moment, I was startled into the belief that something was the matter. As nothing seemed to have transpired, however, I concluded it was sorrow at parting with me.

My God, how the memory of that white wan face came back to me in after days! It was the memory of it, and of the patient, pitiful eyes, which sealed my lips when one word might have proved my salvation.

When John Rudd made his appearance, and my aunt came out of the bedroom, and began crying on my shoulder, I saw the wan, sad eyes of my uncle still fixed upon me. As I left the cottage, I looked back and found them gazing after me still.

CHAPTER XX.

IN LONDON.

On reaching London, I secured a room in a small coffee-house in Soho; and, having deposited my luggage, I started off at once to the offices of the mining company. It was three o'clock, and I counted I might just arrive before they closed.

I was astonished, on arriving at my destination, to find that the 'offices' consisted only of a couple of grimy rooms in a side street off Chancery Lane. I was received by a dilapidated and somewhat dirty old clerk, who was crouched upon a high stool and scribbling away at a desk. He informed me that the head of the firm was

at that moment in his room. I was taken to him, and made haste to state my case.

I soon found that my presence there was comparatively useless. Like master, like man, they say, and certainly George Redruth, in forming a company to conduct the mine, had been careful to select men whose views accorded with his own; besides, my character had preceded me; they had been forewarned of my visit, and to all my complaints they had nothing to say.

Sick at heart I left the place, and walked slowly back towards Charing Cross. What my next move would be I did not know. It was certain I could do nothing for the Cornish miners; and since they could not starve, they must be left to trudge on with that grim skeleton Death for ever by their side!

Pondering thus, I made my way slowly along the crowded sreets, gazing abstractedly

at the sea of faces surrounding me. It was Saturday afternoon, and the Strand was thronged. The hum of the busy crowd distracted me. I turned, intending to pass down one of the side streets and gain the Embankment, when suddenly I stepped face to face with a woman who was coming towards me, and uttered a cry.

It was my cousin Annie!

But so changed was she that I scarcely knew her. She was dressed as a lady, and looked like one; but her face was pale, her eyes looked troubled and sad. She must have been walking quickly, for as I turned to face her she almost fell into my arms.

The cry I gave attracted her; she looked into my face, and knew me.

She paused, uncertain what to do. My sudden appearance there, of all places on the earth, was so unexpected, that it completely

unnerved her. For a moment she seemed about to fly; then, conquering herself, she stood her ground.

'Hugh!' she exclaimed. '*You* here!'

'Yes!' I answered, sternly enough. 'I am here!'

I felt no joy in meeting her. Had she come to me poor, despised, with the taint of sin upon her, I should have taken her in my arms, and said, 'You poor repentant child, come home;' but when she stood before me in her fine raiment, my heart hardened; for I thought of the heart-broken old people whom she had left.

My appearance must have been strange, for I began to attract some attention, when Annie took me by the arm and led me down the side-street I had intended to take. We passed on, never uttering a word, until we came to the

Embankment. Then she let go my arm and spoke.

'Hugh!' she said, 'did you come to London to look for me?'

'No. I came on other business, but I promised to seek you and take you back.'

She was still white as death and trembling violently. As I uttered these words, she shook her head, and her eyes filled with tears.

'I cannot go home, Hugh; not yet,' she said, sadly.

'Not yet?' I repeated. 'Will it ever be better for you than it is now?'

'Yes, Hugh; and soon, I hope, I shall be able to go and cause them no trouble.'

I shrugged my shoulders and half turned away, when she laid her hand upon my arm again and said:

'Hugh, dear Hugh! you have never once

taken my hand; you have not looked at me as you would have done some months ago. You think I have brought shame upon you all; but, indeed, it is not so bad as that—I am a lawful wife.'

'A lawful wife? Whose wife?'

'Ah! do not ask me that. I cannot tell you. But I am a wife; and some day, very soon, I shall be acknowledged. Hugh, will you not take my hand, and say that you forgive me?'

'I have nothing to forgive,' I replied. 'You did me no wrong; but you ruined the happiness of your home, and you have broken your father's heart.'

'Hugh!'

'It is as well for you to hear it, Annie,' I continued. 'When your flight was discovered, your father bore it bravely, we thought; but it seems he hid the worst of his trouble from

us, and pined in secret. It has been like a cankerworm gnawing at his heart; and now he is weak and feeble, like a weary, worn old man!'

I ceased, for Annie had turned away and was crying piteously. I went to her, and took her hand.

'Annie,' I said, 'tell me the name of the man who has been the author of all this trouble, and I will ask no more.'

She shook her head.

'I cannot tell you, Hugh. Why should you wish to know? I tell you I am his wife.'

'If you are his wife, where is the need of all this secrecy?'

'There are reasons why he cannot acknowledge me just now; therefore, I have made a solemn vow never to tell his name until he gives me permission. Is it not enough for you to know that I have not disgraced you, and that I am happy?'

She certainly did not *look* happy. Her pale, pained face, which was turned to mine, seemed to give the lie to every word she spoke.

'Will you tell them at home,' she said, 'that you found me well, and that they must not grieve; because some day soon I shall come back to them?'

'Where are you living now?' I asked.

'Close by here,' she replied, quickly. 'I was on my way home when I met you. Will you come with me, Hugh? I will show you the rooms.'

I assented; and she led the way back towards the Strand. She walked quickly, and paused before a house in Craven Street. Entering with a latch-key which she carried, she passed up a flight of stairs, and entered a room.

'This is where I live, Hugh,' she said.

It was a change indeed from the Cornish kitchen in which she had lived all her life. The room was one which I could imagine Madeline occupying, but which was singularly out of place when coupled with Annie!

Having looked about me, I prepared to leave.

'Where are you going, Hugh?' she asked. 'Home?'

'I don't know,' I answered.

'Shall I see you again?'

'That I don't know. Since you say you are well cared for and happy, where is the use of troubling you? Some day, perhaps, when your sun begins to set, you'll find your way back to those who loved you long before this villain crossed your path!'

I opened the door, stepped across the threshold, and faced two strange men.

A hand was laid upon my shoulder, and a voice said:

'Stop, young man! We want you for *Murder*!'

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

S. & H

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